alekhine's defence

RYMAN CHESS

Nigel Davies

alekhine's defence

Alekhine's Defence is a sharp and often underrated counter to 1 e4. Black immediately challenges the white e-pawn and tries to lure White into constructing a big central position. Black's hope is that White's central installations will become unweildy and vulnerable to a middlegame counter-attack. However, Alekhine enthusiasts must always be careful - get it wrong and White will come crashing through! Whether you want to play the Alekhine, or want to know what to do against it as White, this book will be an essential addition to your armoury.

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by Nigel Davies

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CONTENTS

	Bibliography	*4*
	Introduction	*5*
1	Classical with 4...♗g4	*7*
2	Classical Kengis System: 4...dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6	*25*
3	Classical with 4... dxe5 5 ♘xe5: 5...♘d7 and 5...c6	*42*
4	Classical Divergences: 4...c6, 4...♘c6 and 4...g6	*58*
5	Exchange Variation with 5...cxd6	*77*
6	Exchange Variation with 5...exd6	*93*
7	Four Pawns Attack: Main Line	*105*
8	Four Pawns Attack: Divergences	*117*
9	The Chase Variation	*132*
10	Other Lines	*142*
	Index of Complete Games	*157*

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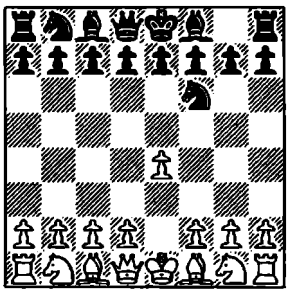
INTRODUCTION



Reykjavik 1972, Game 13. The Soviet World Champion, Boris Spassky, opened the game with 1 e4. He was losing the match by a 7-5 scoreline but had won brilliantly against Fischer's favourite Sicilian Najdorf in Game 11. And the analytical spotlight of the entire Soviet chess machine was now focused on Fischer's favourite openings...

What could Fischer do?

He totally wrong-footed Spassky by playing 1...♘f6, the so-called Alekhine Defence. By the 12th move White was already in a critical position and after a tremendous struggle Fischer won.

The Fischer-Spassky match was the event that fanned the flames of my interest in chess. I was 12 years old and wanted to play like Bobby Fischer, but when I asked more experienced players about this funny knight move, they invariably advised me against playing it. Their wisdom was confirmed when most of the books seemed to agree. This Alekhine Defence was a dubious opening against which White could easily secure a large advantage.

Whilst the Alekhine continued to enjoy its dubious reputation, strong Grandmasters such as Larsen, Korchnoi, Bagirov, Timman, Jansa and Alburt kept winning with it. But how could they keep winning with this dodgy defence? And why were they even playing it in the first place?

Some years later, not much has changed. The Alekhine's reputation is probably even worse, and now it's the likes of Miles, Morozevich, De Firmian, Shabalov, Agdestein, Kengis and Baburin who are playing this defence and winning. Don't they know any better?

Eventually there came a point at which I realised that the wisdom of the frog pond was at odds with reality. It was nothing but talk, which people repeated without ever looking at the positions for themselves. When I finally started to check things out I discovered that the Alekhine is a tough, fighting defence which creates unbalanced positions from the outset. And if anything its dodgy reputation was actually quite helpful; a lot of people were overconfi-

dent and sloppy when playing against it.

As far as results are concerned, in practice the Alekhine scores just shy of 50% on my database, which is better than the French, Caro-Kann, Pirc, Scandinavian and 1...e5. Only the Sicilian is marginally ahead, but that involves being booked up to the gills and treading the same paths of so many other players. From a stylistic point of view the Sicilian is not for everyone; play often proceeds at an unremittingly fast pace in which Black's king often comes into the firing line. The Alekhine, on the other hand, tends to take less forceful paths in which the greatest danger for Black is that of falling into a passive position.

Is the Alekhine the opening for you? There is certainly scope within this defence for many different styles of player, though it seems to me that the ideal Alekhine player should have individuality, flexibility, good nerves, fighting spirit and tactical ability. In my opinion this is not a defence for those with either a methodical, systematic way of thinking or those with very conservative tastes.

In writing this book I have not tried to produce either a complete or a scholarly work. The emphasis has been on getting someone up and running if they want to play the Alekhine as either Black or White, and I have therefore concentrated on what I regard the most promising lines for players of either colour. Accordingly I have devoted relatively little space to the traditional 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 or even Alburt's 4 ♘f3 g6, concentrating instead on the modern treatments with 4...dxe5. I have also taken the position that most Whites should probably want to play either the Exchange Variation or 4 ♘f3; all the other variations are covered mainly from Black's point of view.

If you are using this book to learn the Alekhine, here's how I suggest you go about it:

1) Play through the games very quickly and ignore the notes and subvariations. This is to give you a basic familiarity with the lines and positions.

2) Play a few quick games with the Alekhine, either against your computer, on the internet or at your local chess club, making a brief note of any points of interest.

3) Look up the lines which occurred in these games and find out exactly what you should have done.

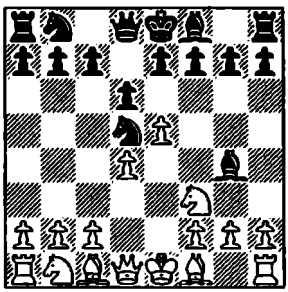
4) Repeat steps 2 and 3 until you get a 'feel' for the defence.

5) Start playing it in selected serious games, again using the book as a source of reference.

Readers who are already playing the Alekhine should also find something of interest. First of all, I made a decision not to hold anything back, so the notes contain a number of new ideas and points at which I disagree with other authors. Secondly, I have tried to point out the lines which I believe are the most logical and promising rather than just list all the possible variations and adorn them with selected soulless symbols.

Nigel Davies
Southport, October 2001

CHAPTER ONE



Classical with 4...♗g4

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4

The Classical Variation is generally recognised as the main line of the Alekhine and probably the hardest thing for Black to fight against.

By playing the modest 4 ♘f3, White sets about developing his kingside and puts the onus on Black to develop some counterplay. Depending on Black's reaction he can either try to maintain the cramping pawn on e5 or capture on d6 to reach a kind of Exchange Variation.

Pinning the knight on f3 with 4...♗g4 certainly looks like the most natural way to intensify pressure against e5. For many years it was regarded as *the* way to play against the Classical and as such a large body of theory has developed around it.

Essentially White has two different plans; either to try and maintain the cramping pawn on e5 or effect a timely liquidation in the centre with exd6. Black tries to force the liquidation whilst trying to make sure that his pieces are well placed when it happens.

Game 7 shows White using plan 'b' in its most direct form, arguing that Black's bishop has gone to g4 prematurely. Usually White will not take such direct action and first play 5 ♗e2. Black then has a choice between Flohr's 5...c6 and the standard 5...e6.

Flohr's move actually contains a minor positional threat of ...♗xf3 followed by ...dxe5, which brings about a position in which the e5-pawn needs constant surveillance and White's bishop pair has little scope. In Game 6 we see White's various strategies for combating this plan, which include switching to a kind of Exchange Variation.

Against 5...e6 White has to make a major decision about whether or not to interpolate the moves 6 h3 ♗h5. The pros and cons of this depend on which plan he intends to adopt later.

The plans which require 6 h3 are Bologan's treatment (Game 4), the 11 cxd5 line, given as a note to White's 11th move in Game 2 and Geller's treatment of 12 ♗xf3, given as a note within the same game. Having 6 h3 ♗h5 included

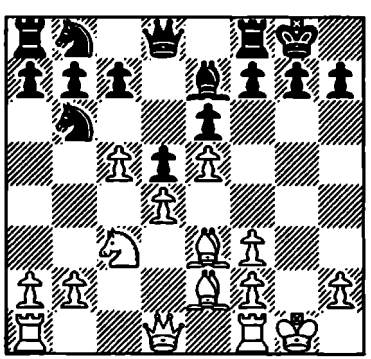
is also useful for White if Black opts for an early ...♘c6 (as in Game 5); if, after d4-d5 plus multiple exchanges, White's queen lands on d5, it will gain a tempo by hitting Black's bishop on h5.

On the other hand, 6 h3 is definitely not required in the 'main line', in which White recaptures on f3 with a pawn. A comparison of Games 1 and 2 shows that h3 is often a useful square for White when he tries to attack Black's king. Blocking it with a pawn reduces his options.

Game 1
Kobalija-Nalbandian
Geller Memorial, Moscow 1999

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 e6 6 0-0 ♗e7 7 c4 ♘b6 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♗e3 d5?! 10 c5 ♗xf3 11 gxf3

As this game was played in the 'Geller Memorial', it would have been more fitting to use Geller's own treatment with 11 ♗xf3. For a discussion of this plan, see the note to White's 12th move in Game 2.



11...♘c8 12 f4 ♗h4

Black has also closed the position with 12...f5 but this has the drawback of being very passive. A good example of how to play White was given by Kiril Georgiev in his game against Popov from the 1986 Bulgarian Championship: 13 ♔h1 g6 14 b4 ♘c6 15 ♖g1 ♔h8 16 ♖g2 ♖g8 17 a3 ♗h4 18 ♗f3 ♘8e7 19 ♕d2 a6 20 ♘e2 ♖g7 21 ♘c1 ♘g8 22 ♘d3 and White will gradually advance his queenside pawns.

13 ♗d3 g6 14 f5!?

If White tries for a slower build-up in this position, Black can at least bring a knight to f5 and might one day be able to lever open the f-file with ...f7-f6. Nevertheless, White must be better, one example being 14 ♔h1 ♘e7 15 ♖g1 ♔h8 16 ♕f3 ♘bc6 17 a3 ♘f5 18 ♘e2 b6 19 ♖ac1 with an edge for White in Kruszynski-Gruen, Hamburg 1984.

14...exf5

After 14...gxf5 15 ♕h5 White will have a very dangerous attack.

15 ♕f3 c6 16 ♔h1 ♔h8?

In such a critical position Black must play with the utmost accuracy. He should probably take the bull by the horns and undermine White's e5-pawn with 16...f6!?, after which Finkel gave the line 17 e6 ♗g5 18 ♖ae1 ♖e8 19 ♗xf5!? gxf5 20 ♗xg5!? fxg5 21 ♕xf5 ♖f8 22 ♕g4 ♕f6 23 f4 ♕xd4 24 ♕xg5+ ♔h8 25 f5 when it's anybody's guess what's happening.

17 ♖g1 ♘a6?!

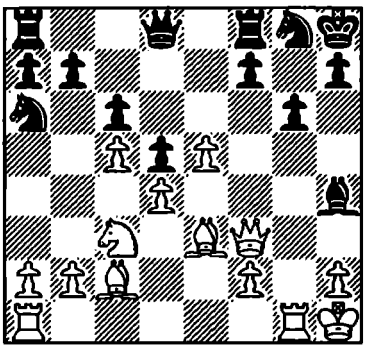
Black seems to be unaware of the imminent danger to his king. He had to try 17...f6!?.

18 ♗xf5! ♘e7

Accepting the sacrifice with 18...gxf5 loses immediately to 19 ♗h6 ♖g8 20 ♖xg8+ ♕xg8 21 ♖g1 etc.

19 ♗c2 ♘g8

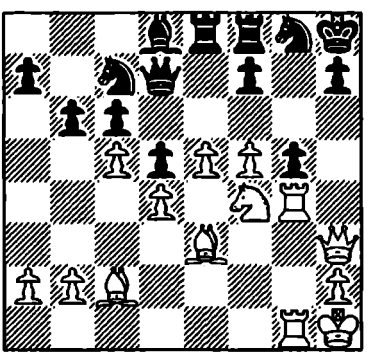
Or 19...f5 20 ♕h3 ♘g8 21 ♘e2 ♘c7 22 ♘f4 with a sacrifice on g6 coming up. When White plays these gxf3 lines he often makes use of the h3-square. This is one argument in favour of omitting the moves h2-h3 and ...♗h5.



20 ♕h3 ♘c7 21 ♖g4 ♗e7 22 ♖ag1 ♕d7 23 f4!

The advance of the f-pawn increases the strength of White's attack to decisive proportions.

23...♖ae8 24 f5 ♗d8 25 ♘e2 b6 26 ♘f4 g5



27 ♕xh7+!! ♔xh7 28 f6+ ♔h6

Or 28...♔h8 29 ♖xg5 ♘h6 (29...♖xe5 only delays the inevitable after 30 dxe5 ♘xf6 31 exf6) 30 ♖h5 is the end of the road.

29 ♖h4+! gxh4 30 ♘e6+ ♔h5 31 ♗d1 mate (1-0)

Game 2
Aseev-Bagirov
Berlin 1990

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 e6 6 0-0 ♗e7 7 c4 ♘b6 8 h3 ♗h5 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♗e3 d5

Black cannot keep the tension too long as 10...♘c6 is met by 11 exd6 cxd6 12 d5 exd5 13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♕xd5, with the better game for White because of the weakness on d6.

11 c5

White has another interesting plan in 11 cxd5 and now:

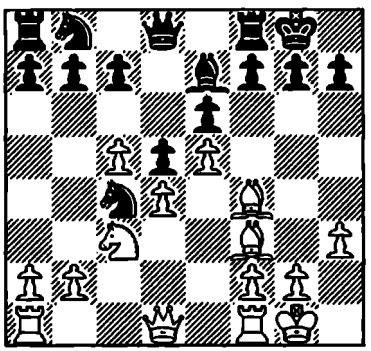
a) After 11...♘xd5 White can play 12 ♕b3 ♘b6 13 d5!? (13 ♖fd1 is also possible) 13...exd5 (13...♘xd5 is met by 14 ♖fd1 c6 15 ♕xb7) 14 ♗xb6 axb6 15 ♘xd5 ♗c5 16 ♖ad1 ♕c8 17 a3 ♘c6 18 ♕c3 ♖e8 19 ♖fe1 with the better game for White according to Kremenietsky.

b) 11...exd5 12 g4!? (12 ♘e1 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♘c6 14 ♘d3 ♕d7 15 ♖ad1 ♘d8 16 ♘c5 ♕c8 17 f4 f5 left Black with an ultra-solid game in Plachetka-Bagirov, Kirovakan 1978) 12...♗g6 13 ♘e1 f6 (13...f5 14 ♘d3 c6 15 ♘f4 ♕d7 16 ♔h2 gave Black serious problems on the g-file in Ornstein-Alburt, Reykjavik 1984; if Black wants to play ...f5 he should wait until White plays f2-f4) 14 f4 fxe5!? (Setting up a blockade with 14...f5 would be more solid, especially since White can no longer put a knight on f4) 15 dxe5 c5 16 f5 ♗e8 17 ♗f4 ♗c6 18 ♗f3 d4 19 ♘e4 ♘d5 20 ♘g2 ♘d7 21 ♗g3 and both sides have chances,

King-Baburin, British League 2000.

11...♗xf3 12 gxf3

This has been the most popular way to play it, preventing Black's knight from coming to c4. But Efim Geller considered the pawn recapture rather dubious, instead preferring his patented 12 ♗xf3!? ♘c4 13 ♗f4



and now:

a) 13...b6 14 b3 ♘a5 15 ♖c1 (15 ♘a4!? ♘d7 16 ♕d2 c6 was played in Ciocaltea-Williams, Nice Olympiad 1974 and now 17 ♗g4!? was given as White's best by Ciocaltea; 15 ♕d2!? is also interesting) 15...bxc5 16 dxc5 ♘ac6 17 ♖e1 ♗g5 18 ♘xd5!? exd5 19 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 20 ♗xd5 (Schmid also mentioned 20 ♕xd5!? ♖d8 21 ♕c4 ♖d4 22 ♕c3, assessing the position as 'unclear') 20...♔h8 was a game Kavalek-Schmid, Nice Olympiad 1974, in which White should now have played 21 ♕e2 a5 22 ♕e4 ♖a6 23 f4 with two pawns for the piece and badly placed black pieces.

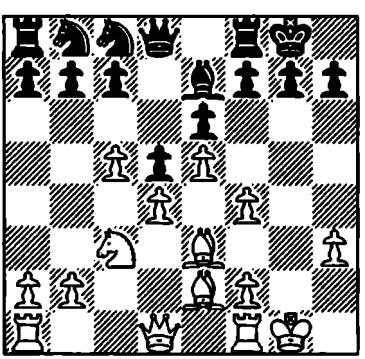
b) 13...♘c6 14 b3 ♘4a5 15 ♖c1 (Geller played 15 ♕d2 b6 16 ♖ac1 bxc5 17 dxc5 in his game against Hecht from Budapest 1973 but during the subsequent game against Bronstein he became concerned about 17...♕b8!?) 15...b6 (15...♗g5 16 ♘e2 ♗xf4 17 ♘xf4 ♘e7 18 ♗g4 ♘ac6 19 ♕d2 was marginally better for White in Hübner-Hort, Biel 1984 whilst 15...♕d7 16 ♗e3 f6 17 exf6 ♗xf6 18 ♕d2 b6 19 ♘a4 ♘e7 20 ♗e2 ♘f5 was pretty much equal in Geller-Bagirov, Tbilisi 1978) 16 ♘a4 b5?! (according to Geller Black should have played either 16...♗g5 or 16...f6) 17 ♘c3 b4 18 ♘e2 and White was clearly better in Geller-Bronstein, Petropolis Interzonal 1973.

12...♘c8

The knight hopes to come to f5 via e7.

13 f4

This has been played almost automatically but in McShane-Baburin, Cambridge 1995 White took some space on the queenside with 13 b4!?, after which 13...♘c6 14 ♕a4 ♗h4 15 ♗d3 f6 16 f4 ♘6e7 17 ♘e2 ♘f5?! (a preliminary 17...fxe5 is better) 18 ♗xf5 exf5 19 ♕c2 ♘e7 20 ♔h2 ♕d7 21 ♖g1 gave him pressure on the g-file and a passed pawn on e5.



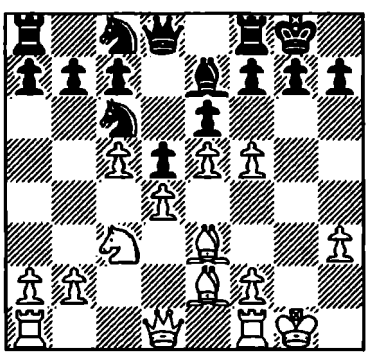
13...♘c6

With the moves h2-h3 and ...♗h5 White can no longer use the h3-square in some of his attacking lines. For this

reason Black has slightly more justification in playing 13...♗h4 here. It would then be pointless for White to play 14 ♗d3 g6 15 f5?! exf5 16 ♕f3 c6 17 ♔h1 ♔h8 18 ♖g1 ♘e7. Instead White should play 15 ♕g4 but Black is still doing okay after 15...♔h8 (Agzamov's suggestion of 15...h5 16 ♕f3 ♘e7 would also leave White regretting the fact that he couldn't put his queen on h3) 16 b4 ♘c6 17 ♖ab1 h5! 18 ♕f3 ♘8e7 19 b5 ♘a5 20 ♔h2 b6 (Diesen-Vaganian, Hastings 1974/75) and now 21 f5 missed the mark after 21...exf5 22 ♕f4 ♘g8 23 ♖g1 ♘c4 24 e6 ♔h7 25 exf7 ♖xf7 etc.

The stodgy 13...f5 would reduce White's attacking chances but leave Black without counterplay. A good example of how to play these positions with White was given in the Georgiev-Popov note within the previous game.

14 f5



14...exf5 15 ♗f3

If White can just recapture on d5 and then advance his central pawns he will have a huge advantage. But Black is able to stop this plan.

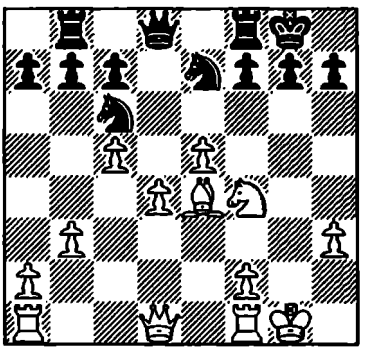
15...♗g5! 16 ♘xd5 f4! 17 ♗xf4

17 ♗c1 has also been played but then Black can get an excellent position with Volzhin's suggestion of 17...♘8e7 18 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7! 19 ♗xc6 bxc6 20 ♕f3 ♕e6 (21 ♗xf4? ♕f5 wins a piece).

17...♗xf4 18 ♘xf4 ♘8e7!

And not 18...♘xd4 because of 19 ♗xb7 ♖b8 20 ♗g2! ♖xb2 21 ♕g4! with a strong attack.

19 b3 ♖b8 20 ♗e4?!



Overestimating his chances. He should play 20 ♘e2 ♕d7 21 ♗g4 ♕d5 22 f4 (and not 22 ♕d2 ♘xe5) 22...♖fd8 23 ♗f3 ♕d7 24 ♗g4 ♕d5 with a draw by repetition.

20...♕xd4!

Black is quite right to want to exchange queens as after 20...♘xd4? 21 ♕g4! White obtains a strong attack.

21 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 22 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 23 ♖d3?

23 ♘d5 was relatively best, though Black is still better after 23...♘e2+! 24 ♔f1 ♘xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 26 ♗xd5 ♘f4! 27 ♗g2 ♔f8 because of his strong knight on f4 and White's weak pawns.

23...♘dc6 24 e6?

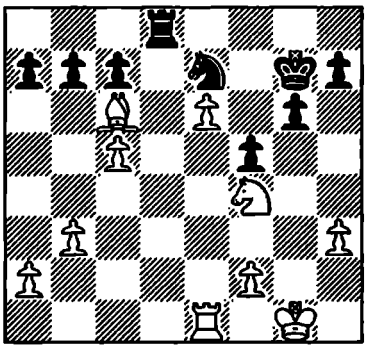
And this is probably the losing move. He has to play 24 ♗xc6 ♖xd3 25 ♘xd3 with chances to make a draw.

24...f5! 25 ♗g2 ♖xd3 26 ♘xd3 ♖d8

27 ♘f4 g6!

Intending to bring his king to f6 from where it puts pressure on the weak e6-pawn.

28 ♖e1 ♔g7 29 ♗xc6



29...bxc6!

And not 29...♘xc6? which fails for a moment to keep White's passed pawn 'under lock and key'. White could then draw with 30 e7! ♖e8 31 ♘e6+ ♔f7 32 ♘xc7 ♖xe7 33 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 34 f4 (Volzhin).

30 ♔g2

Trying to prevent 30...g5 with 30 h4 loses to 30...♖d4.

30...g5! 31 ♘e2 ♔f6 32 h4 gxh4! 33 ♘f4 ♖d4 34 ♔f3 ♖e4 35 ♖xe4 fxe4+ 36 ♔xe4 ♘d5 37 ♘e2

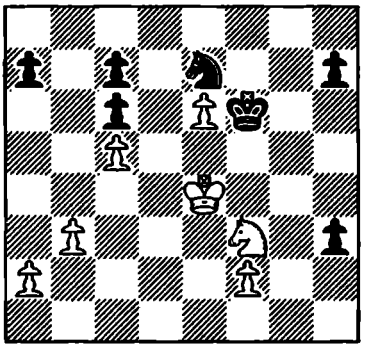
The pawn ending is lost because of Black's distant passed pawns. The passed h-pawn is also the deciding factor in the knight endgame.

37...♘e7! 38 ♘d4

If White tried to repeat the position with 38 ♘f4 I'm sure that Bagirov would have varied this time with 38...♘g6.

38...h3! 39 ♘f3

Black is also winning after 39 ♔f3 ♔e5.



39...♘d5 40 e7 ♔xe7 41 ♔f5 ♘f6! 42 ♔f4 ♔e6 43 ♔g3 ♘e4+ 44 ♔xh3 ♘xf2+ 45 ♔h4 ♔d5 46 ♔g5 0-1

46 ♔g5 ♘d3 47 ♔h6 ♘c1 will mop up White's queenside pawns.

Game 3

Mainka-Yusupov

German Ch., Bremen 1998

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 e6 6 0-0 ♗e7

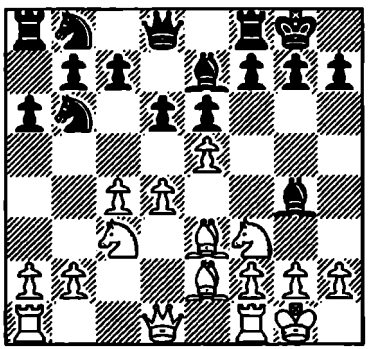
It's also interesting for Black to play 6...a6!? at this early stage. The game De Firmian-Baburin, Copenhagen 1996 continued 7 c4 ♘b6 8 ♕b3 ♗e7 9 ♖d1 ♘8d7 10 ♗f4 0-0 11 ♘bd2 dxe5 12 dxe5 ♕e8 with a cramped but playable position for Black.

7 c4 ♘b6 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♗e3 a6

An interesting move which threatens 10...♗xf3 (after 11 ♗xf3 ♘xc4 12 ♗xb7 Black has the a7-square for his rook) and can be useful against plans which involve an advance of White's queenside pawns.

One good reason for White insert the moves h2-h3 and ...♗h5 is that Black can now play 9...♘c6. The point is that

10 exd6 cxd6 11 d5 exd5 12 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 13 ♕xd5 is not as good for White as it might have been because he is not hitting the bishop on h5. This allows Black to play 13...♗f6 (or maybe 13...♗e6).



10 ♘d2

This allows Black to obtain a very comfortable position. White's more challenging options are as follows:

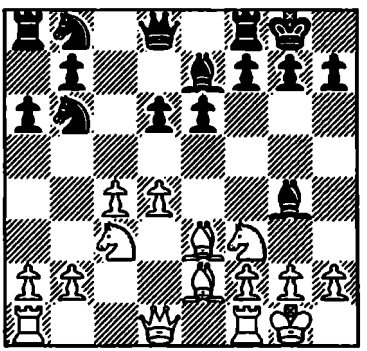
a) 10 b3 and now:

a1) 10...♘8d7 11 h3 (11 ♖c1 ♖b8 12 ♖e1 dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 15 ♕xg4 ♘d7 16 ♗h6 also gave White the freer game in Oratovsky-Zilberman, Israeli Team Ch. 1996) 11...♗f5 12 exd6 cxd6 13 ♖e1!? h6 14 ♗d3 ♗xd3 15 ♕xd3 ♖c8 16 ♖ad1 ♖e8 17 ♗f4 and White had a slight space advantage in Chandler-Hort, Surakarta 1982, though it is difficult to achieve anything because Black's structure is flexible and sound.

a2) Alternatively Black can play 10...d5, after which 11 c5 ♘6d7 12 ♘d2 ♗f5 13 f4 f6 14 ♘f3 (14 g4!? is more aggressive) 14...fxe5 15 fxe5 ♘c6 16 ♗d3 b6 gave him equality in Spasov-Ehlvest, Biel Interzonal 1993.

b) 10 ♕b3 is a reasonable move but after 10...dxe5 he should resist the temptation to play 11 c5?! (11 ♘xe5 ♗xe2 12 ♘xe2 ♘8d7 with equality is better) 11...exd4 12 cxb6 c5 13 ♖fd1 ♕e8 14 ♘xd4 cxd4 15 ♗xd4 ♗xe2 16 ♘xe2 ♘c6 with the better game for Black in Rabiega-Jansa, Austrian Team Ch. 1995.

c) 10 exd6 cxd6



and now:

c1) The standard 11 b3 is fine for Black after 11...d5 12 c5 (or 12 h3 ♗h5 13 ♘e5 ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 ♘c6 15 ♖fd1 ♗f6 with equality as in Anand-Yusupov, Wijk aan Zee {7th match-game} 1994) 12...♘c8 13 b4 ♘c6 14 ♕b3 ♗f6 15 ♖fd1 ♘8e7 16 ♖d2 ♘f5 as in Dolmatov-Morozevich, Moscow (rapid) 1995.

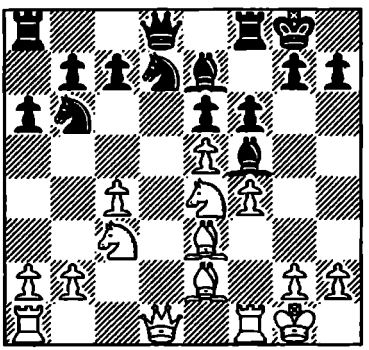
c2) 11 d5!? ♗xf3 (11...e5 produces a position very much akin to Hamdouchi-Baburin, but having the pawn on a6 is of doubtful value) 12 ♗xf3 ♘xc4 13 dxe6 fxe6 14 ♗g4 ♕d7 15 ♕e2 ♘e5 16 ♗h3 ♘bc6 17 f4 ♘f7 18 ♗b6 ♘fd8 19 ♘d5 and White had more than enough for the pawn in Ulibin-Kengis, Pinsk 1986.

10...♗f5

Better than 10...♗xe2?! 11 ♕xe2

dxe5 12 dxe5 when White has a useful space edge.

11 ♘de4 dxe5 12 dxe5 ♘8d7 13 f4 f6



14 ♕b3!?

This leads to great complications. White could also play 14 exf6 ♘xf6 15 ♘c5 with a fairly even game.

14...fxe5 15 fxe5 ♗xe4

Simplifying the position. Black could also play 15...♘xe5 but then White has compensation for the pawn.

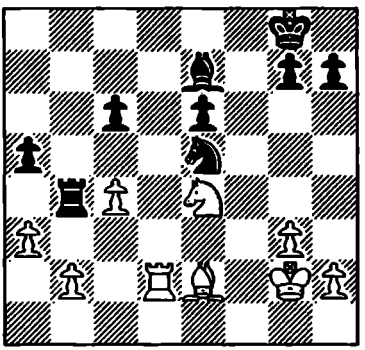
16 ♘xe4 ♘xe5 17 ♖ad1 ♖xf1+ 18 ♗xf1 ♕e8

Once again aiming for a small but clear advantage rather than risk life and limb in continuing complications. After 18...♕c8 White can play 19 c5 ♘d5 20 ♖xd5!? exd5 21 ♕xd5+ ♘f7 22 ♗c4 with dangerous compensation for the exchange.

19 ♗xb6 cxb6 20 ♕xb6 ♕c6 21 ♕xc6 bxc6

The arising endgame should be assessed as slightly better for Black, but Black's advantage has symbolical character and it's really hard to believe that White will lose this position in ten moves!

22 ♗e2 ♖f8 23 g3 a5 24 ♔g2 ♖b8 25 ♖d2 ♖b4 26 a3?!



A slight mistake which creates weaknesses in the queenside. The simplest way to hold the position is with 26 b3 followed by a transfer of the bishop to c2 via d1.

26...♖b3 27 ♔f2

And here 27 c5 is a better try.

27...c5 28 ♘c3 ♗g5 29 ♖c2 ♘c6 30 ♘b5?

The losing move. White had to play 30 ♘d1 although admittedly Black has some pressure after 30...♘d4 31 ♖c3 ♖b7 etc.

30...♘d4 31 ♘xd4 ♗e3+! 32 ♔f3 ♗xd4+ 33 ♔e4 ♗xb2 34 a4 ♗d4 35 ♗d3 ♖a3 36 ♖c1 ♖xa4 37 ♖b1 ♖a2 38 h4 a4 39 g4 a3 40 ♖b8+ ♔f7 41 ♖b7+ ♔f6 42 ♖a7 h6 0-1

Game 4

Hamdouchi-Baburin

Saint Vincent 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 e6 6 h3 ♗h5 7 c4 ♘b6 8 exd6

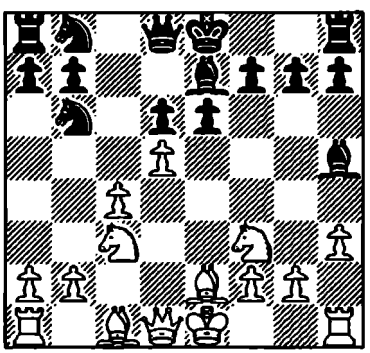
In the game Polgar-Yusupov, Dortmund 1995 White tried 8 ♘c3 ♗e7 9 d5 but got nothing more than a fairly

even endgame after 9...exd5 10 cxd5 dxe5 11 g4 ♗g6 12 ♘xe5 ♘8d7 13 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 (13...♘xd7 is also very reasonable, but Yusupov likes endgames) 14 ♗b5 c6 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 17 ♗a6 ♗d6. Both sides have some pawn weaknesses here.

8...cxd6 9 ♘c3 ♗e7

In view of the apparent strength of White's reply, Black might also consider 9...♘c6!?, after which 10 d5 exd5 11 cxd5 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘e5 leads to positions similar to the next game, Nguyen Anh Dung-Anastasian.

10 d5!



An interesting new approach to the position that was introduced by Bologan. White simply takes some space in the centre and challenges his opponent to find enough counterplay.

10...e5

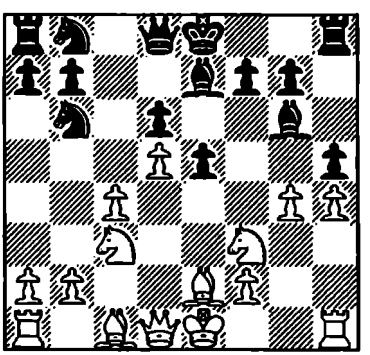
After 10...exd5 11 ♘xd5 0-0 12 0-0 White is simply better because of his strong knight and the weakness of Black's d-pawn. The attempt to win a pawn with 12...♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♘xc4 would then be bad because of 14 ♕c2! ♘e5 15 ♗e4! ♘bc6 (15...g6 16 ♘c7) 16 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 17 f4, with White having the two bishops and Black's king looking weak.

11 g4!?

An improvement on Bologan-Tischbierek, Vienna 1996, in which Bologan played 11 ♗e3 and obtained the initiative after 11...♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘8d7 13 ♕e2 ♖c8 14 b3 f5?! (simply 14...0-0 looks like a possible improvement) 15 g4!. Bologan introduced 11 g4 in a subsequent game against Agdestein.

11...♗g6 12 h4 h5

Bologan-Agdestein, Yerevan Olympiad 1996 continued 12...h6 13 ♗d3! ♕c8!? (13...♗xd3 14 ♕xd3 ♕c8 15 b3 ♕xg4 16 ♖g1 ♕h5 17 ♖xg7 f5 is strongly met by 18 ♘b5! e4 19 ♕d4 etc.) 14 ♗xg6 fxg6 15 ♘d2 0-0 (15...♘xc4? 16 ♕a4+ wins the knight) 16 b3 ♖f4 17 g5! and White stood clearly better because of his mighty grip on the e4-square.



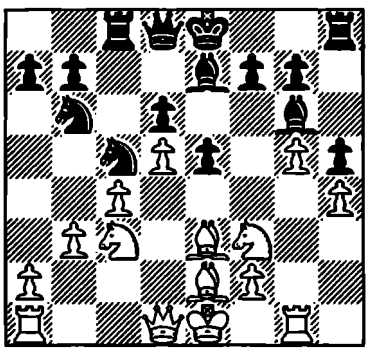
13 g5 ♘8d7 14 ♗e3 ♖c8

In Vescovi-Leitao, Itabirito 1998, Black played 14...a6 but still found himself in difficulties after 15 b3 ♕c7 16 ♗d3 0-0 17 ♘e4 (17 ♗xg6 fxg6 18 ♘d2 followed by 19 ♘de4 was another good line) 17...♗xe4 18 ♗xe4 g6 19 ♘d2 ♘c5 and now Volzhin suggested 20 ♗c2 (instead of Vescovi's 20 ♕c2)

with a clearly better game for White after 20...a5 (20...♖ac8 21 b4!? ♘cd7 22 ♗b3) 21 ♖b1.

14...♗f5 has also been tried but after 15 ♘d2 g6 16 ♘de4, intending ♘g3, White was clearly better in Leonardo-Rodrigues, Maceira 1997.

15 b3 ♘c5 16 ♖g1!?



Although this is partly as prophylaxis against Black moving his f-pawn, the rook may also become an attacking piece in some lines.

16...♘bd7 17 b4!? e4!?

Both sides play sharply and the game gets thrown out of its 'normal' pattern. The alternative was 17...♘e4.

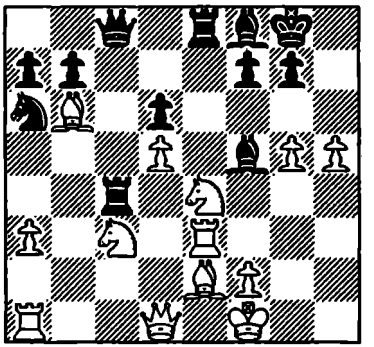
18 ♘d2 ♘d3+ 19 ♔f1 ♘xb4 20 ♘dxe4 0-0 21 ♗d4 ♖e8 22 a3 ♘a6 23 ♗xh5 ♖xc4 24 ♗e2 ♕c8!?

Black must act with urgency before the storm breaks on the kingside. After 24...♖c8 25 h5 ♗xe4 26 ♘xe4 ♘ac5 27 ♘g3! White's knight will come to f5 with a ferocious attack.

25 h5!

Ignoring Black's offer of the exchange as after 25 ♗xc4 ♕xc4+ 26 ♔g2 ♘dc5 Black obtains some counterplay

25...♗f5 26 ♖g3 ♗f8 27 ♖e3 ♘b6 28 ♗xb6



28...♖cxe4

The only move. Both 28...axb6 29 ♗xc4 ♕xc4+ 30 ♕e2 and 28...♗xe4 29 ♗xc4 ♕xc4+ 30 ♕e2 are hopeless for Black.

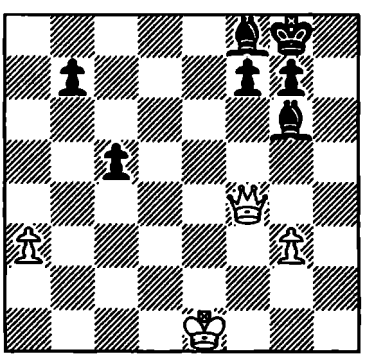
29 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 30 ♗xa7 ♕f5 31 ♕d4! ♘c5 32 ♖g3 ♗xd5 33 ♗g4 ♕xg5 34 ♗f3 ♕xg3!?

With both sides in time-trouble, Black tries his last chance. After 34...♕e5 35 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 36 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 37 ♗xc5 dxc5 38 ♖b1 Black's position is hopeless.

35 fxg3 ♗xf3 36 ♗xc5

36 ♖e1 is probably simpler though White should be winning in any case.

36...dxc5 37 ♕f4 ♗xh5 38 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 39 ♔xe1 ♗g6



40 a4?

On the last move before the time control White lets the win slip. He should first play 40 ♕c4!, preventing Black's bishop from coming to a6.

40...♗d3! 41 a5 ♗b5 42 ♕c7 ♗a6

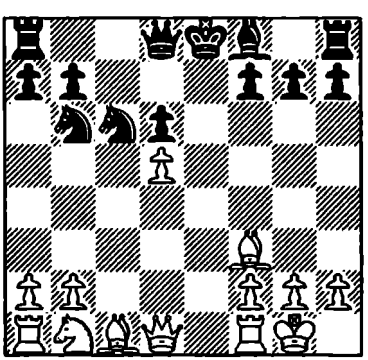
Building an impenetrable fortress. A draw is now inevitable.

43 g4 g6 44 g5 c4 45 ♔d2 ♗b4+ 46 ♔c2 ♔g7 47 ♕d8 ♔h7 48 ♕f6 ♔g8 ½-½

Game 5
Nguyen Anh Dung-Anastasian
Budapest 1999

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 e6 6 0-0 ♘c6 7 c4 ♘b6 8 exd6 cxd6 9 d5 exd5 10 cxd5 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3

White can also consider 11 gxf3!?, after which 11...♘e5?! 12 ♗b5+ ♘ed7 (12...♘bd7 loses a piece after 13 f4 ♘g6 14 f5 ♘ge5 15 ♕e2 followed by f2-f4) 13 ♕d4 ♕f6 14 ♖e1+ ♗e7 15 ♕xf6 gxf6 16 ♘c3 gave White the better endgame in Vogt-Uddenfeldt, Skopje Olympiad 1972.



11...♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♗e7 13 ♘c3

In the game Oratovsky-Kaenel, Saanen 1994, White found another way to develop his queen's knight. After 13 a4 0-0 14 f4 ♘g6 15 a5 ♘d7 he played 16 ♘d2!? and had the better game after 16...♕c7 17 ♘c4 b5 18 ♘e3 because of his bishops and space.

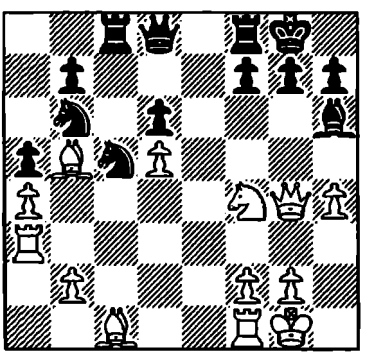
13...0-0 14 a4 a5 15 ♖a3 ♘ed7 16 ♗b5 ♘c5 17 ♘e2 ♗g5 18 ♘f4?!

White starts to lose his way and over the next few moves launches a somewhat wild 'attack' on the kingside. According to Finkel, he should have played 18 f4 ♗f6 19 g4!? g6 20 g5 ♗g7 21 f5!? f6 22 fxg6 hxg6 23 gxf6 ♖xf6 24 ♖g3 when Black's king is the weaker of the two.

18...♖c8 19 h4 ♗h6

Snatching the h-pawn with 19...♗xh4 is obviously quite risky after 20 ♖h3, but it's by no means clear that this would be bad.

20 ♕g4?!



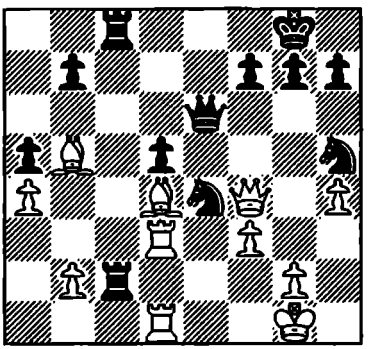
Continuing with his 'plan' at the cost of his d-pawn but this proves to be a highly speculative venture. White should have played the consolidating 20 g3.

20...♗xf4 21 ♗xf4 ♘xd5 22 ♗g5 ♘f6 23 ♕f3 d5 24 ♖d1 ♘ce4 25 ♖ad3 ♕b6 26 ♗e3 ♕e6 27 ♗d4

♖c2 28 ♕f4 ♖fc8 29 f3?

Probably missing Black's reply. After 29 ♖e1 the position would be very messy; Black is a pawn up but White's bishops are very strong.

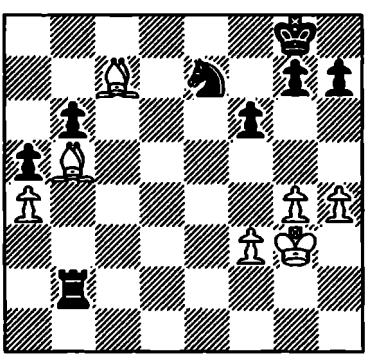
29...♘h5



30 ♕e5

Unfortunately for White he is forced to enter what is probably a losing endgame. After 30 ♕e3 there is 30...♕g6! 31 g4 ♕d6! when Black obtains a winning attack.

30...♕xe5 31 ♗xe5 ♘f2 32 ♖xd5 ♘xd1 33 ♖xd1 ♖c1 34 ♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 35 ♔h2 ♘f6 36 ♗c3 b6 37 ♗c6 ♖d1 38 g4 ♘d5 39 ♗e5 f6 40 ♗b8 ♖d2+ 41 ♔g3 ♘e7 42 ♗b5 ♖xb2 43 ♗c7



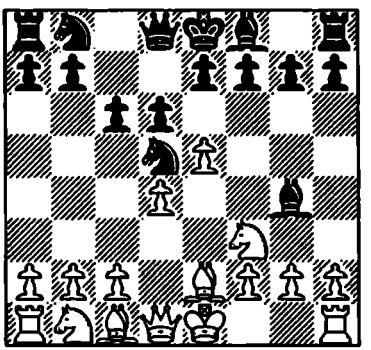
43...♖xb5!

The simplest.

44 axb5 ♘d5 45 ♗d6 ♘c3 46 ♗c7 ♘xb5 47 ♗xb6 a4 48 ♗e3 a3 49 ♗c1 a2 50 ♗b2 ♘a3 51 ♔f4 ♘c2 52 ♔e4 a1♕ 53 ♗xa1 ♘xa1 54 ♔d4 ♘b3+ 0-1

Game 6
Zarnicki-Malbran
Argentine Ch., Buenos Aires 1998

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 c6



Salo Flohr's favourite line, which received enthusiastic support in Burgess's books on the Alekhine.

6 c4

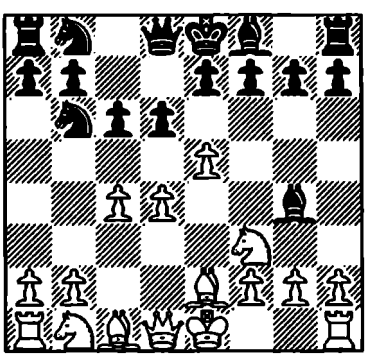
The simplest approach, which gives White an edge without getting involved in murky complications.

White's sharpest line is 6 ♘g5 ♗f5 (6...♗xe2 7 ♕xe2 is better for White) 7 e6 fxe6 8 g4 (8 ♗h5+ g6 9 g4 has also been played but it seems fine for Black after 9...♗xc2 10 ♕xc2 gxh5 11 ♘xe6 ♕d7) 8...♗g6 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 ♘f6 (10...g6 11 c4 ♘f6 12 ♘xe6 ♕c8 13 ♕e2 ♘a6 14 ♘c3 ♘c7 15 d5 ♘xe6 16 dxe6 followed by ♗f4 and 0-0-0

gave White attacking chances in Keres-Bhend, Zurich 1968) 11 ♘xe6 ♕d7 12 ♕e2 ♔f7 13 ♘g5+ ♔g8 14 ♖g1 ♘a6 15 ♘c3 ♖e8, De Firmian-Burgess, Gausdal 1995, and now White's best is probably 16 ♗f4, as De Firmian suggested after the game.

One of the points of Black's system is that the 'natural' 6 0-0 can be met by 6...♗xf3 7 ♗xf3 dxe5 8 dxe5 e6 producing a position in which White's bishops have little scope and the e5-pawn is weak. One example is Ivanovic-Kovacevic, Yugoslav Ch., Subotica 1984, which went 9 ♕e2 ♘d7 10 g3 ♕c7 11 ♖e1 ♗c5 12 ♘d2 0-0 13 ♘b3 ♗b6 14 c4 ♘e7 (this is often a key manoeuvre for Black; the knight can come to g6 from where it hits e5) 15 ♗d2 a5 16 ♗c3 a4 17 ♘d2 ♗a5!, exchanging off White's dark-squared bishop, which is a crucial defender of e5.

6...♘b6

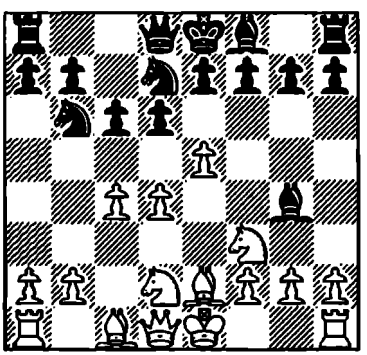


7 ♘bd2

White has an interesting alternative in 7 ♘g5!? ♗xe2 (7...♗f5?! is not as good with the moves c2-c4 and ...♘b6 thrown in as after 8 e6 fxe6 9 g4 ♗g6 10 ♗d3 ♗xd3 11 ♕xd3 Black's knight cannot come to f6 to help with the defence of his kingside) 8 ♕xe2 h6 9 ♘f3 dxe5 10 dxe5 e6 11 0-0 ♘8d7 12 ♗f4, which was rather good for White in Ernst-Urday, Manila Olympiad 1992.

7...♘8d7

After 7...dxe5 8 ♘xe5 White has a pleasant space advantage and the attempt to grab a pawn with 8...♗xe2 9 ♕xe2 ♕xd4 gave White a strong attack after 10 ♘df3 ♕c5 11 0-0 f6 12 ♗e3 ♕a5 13 ♗d2 ♕a6 14 b3! fxe5 15 ♘xe5 ♘8d7 16 ♕h5+ g6 17 ♘xg6 ♘f6 18 ♕h3 in Marczell-Krecak, correspondence 1986.



8 exd6

The simple move, aiming for an exchange variation in which Black's pieces are rather passively placed – Black is unable to aim for the traditional counterplay against d4 based on ...♘c6.

Once again White can play the sharp 8 ♘g5 ♗f5 (8...♗xe2?! allows 9 e6! after which 9...fxe6 10 ♕xe2 is clearly better for White) with unclear consequences after 9 e6 fxe6 10 g4 ♗g6 11 ♘xe6 (this time 11 ♗d3 is unavailable) 11...♕c8 etc.

The line 8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♘xf3 dxe5 10 dxe5 e6 is better for White than the positions arising from 6 0-0 ♗xf3 be-

cause his knight on f3 lends support to the e5-pawn. Even so, I'd prefer to avoid them with White because Black's pieces would operate quite nicely on the dark squares.

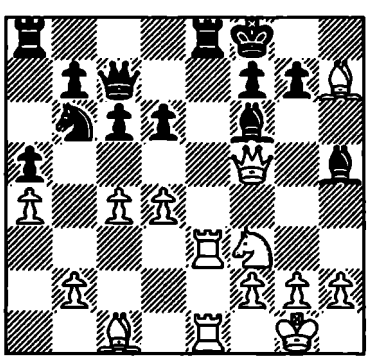
8...exd6 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 a4!?

An interesting move which aims to create weaknesses in Black's queenside and bring the a1-rook into play via a3. Black's reply creates a 'hole' on b4, but his knights are too far away for this to be a problem for White.

10...a5 11 ♖e1 0-0 12 ♖a3 ♖e8 13 ♖e3 ♕c7

The game Yudasin-Timoshenko, Podolsky 1989 went 13...♘f8 14 ♕b3! ♗e6 15 ♗d3 ♖b8 16 ♕c2 d5 (maybe 16...♕c7 was better) 17 c5 ♘bd7 18 ♘b3, intending 19 ♗d2, with a strong initiative. Another possibility is 13...♘f6 but this still looks nice for White after 14 ♕c2 ♗h5 15 ♗d3 etc.

14 ♗d3 ♘f6 15 ♕c2 ♗h5 16 ♘e4 ♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗f6 18 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 19 ♕f5?!



White has seen an apparently attractive 'combination', but there's a big hole in his calculations. According to Finkel, White is basically just a pawn up after 19 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 20 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 21 ♗g5! ♗xg5 (21...♗xf3? 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 23 gxf3 is even worse) 22 ♘xg5 ♕e7 (or 22...g6?! 23 ♗g8!) 23 h4 etc.

19...♗xf3 20 ♕xf6??

This is the point of White's previous move, but unfortunately he has missed something. It wasn't too late to bail out with 20 ♕xf3.

20...gxf6 21 ♖xe8+ ♔g7

Is this what White had missed? Of course Black cannot play 21...♖xe8?? because of 22 ♗h6 mate.

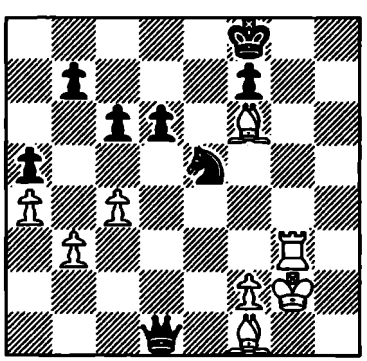
22 ♖8e7 ♕c8

Black has a queen for a rook and everything seems to be clear, but the fun is just beginning!

23 ♗d3 ♕g4 24 ♗f1 ♖g8!? 25 h3 ♕h5 26 gxf3 ♕xf3?

26...♔h8+ 27 ♔h2 ♕g6 forces mate.

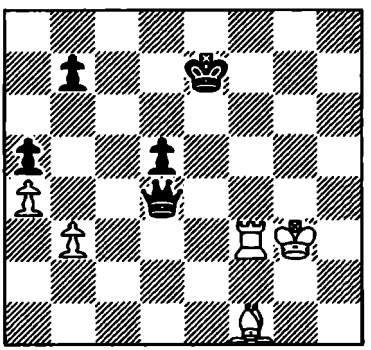
27 ♖7e4 ♔h8+ 28 ♖g4 ♖xg4+ 29 hxg4 ♕xg4+ 30 ♔h2 ♕h4+ 31 ♔g1 ♕xd4 32 b3 ♕g4+ 33 ♗g2 ♘d7 34 ♗b2 ♘e5 35 ♖e3 ♕d1+ 36 ♗f1 ♘f3+ 37 ♔g2 ♘h4+ 38 ♔g1 ♔g7 39 ♖g3+ ♔f8 40 ♗xf6 ♘f3+ 41 ♔g2 ♘e5



Black has been making heavy weather of winning this game, but he's still got his extra queen.

42 ♗d8 ♘g6 43 ♗g5 ♕h5!? 44

♗d3 ♘e5 45 ♗f1 ♘g4 46 ♗e3 ♕h2+ 47 ♔f3 ♘xe3 48 ♔xe3 f5 49 ♗d3 f4+ 50 ♔xf4 ♕xf2+ 51 ♖f3 ♕d4+ 52 ♔g3+ ♔e7 53 ♗f1 ♕g1+ 54 ♔f4 ♕d4+ 55 ♔g3 d5 56 cxd5 cxd5



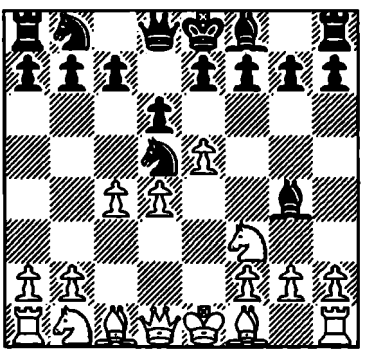
The beginning of the end. Eventually Black will be able to push his passed d-pawn.

57 ♗b5 ♕g1+ 58 ♔f4 ♔f6 59 ♖d3 ♕f2+ 60 ♖f3 ♕d4+ 61 ♔g3+ ♔e5 62 ♖d3 ♕f4+ 63 ♔g2 ♔e4 64 ♖h3 ♕d2+ 65 ♔f1 ♕d1+ 66 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 67 ♔f1 ♔d4 68 ♖h4+ ♔e3?! 69 ♖h3+ ♔e4 70 ♖h4+ ♔f3 71 ♖h3+ ♔f4 72 ♖d3 ♕c1+ 73 ♔e2 ♕c2+ 74 ♔f1 ♔e4 75 ♖h3 ♕d1+ 76 ♔g2 ♕g4+ 77 ♖g3 ♕f4 78 ♖h3 ♔d4 79 ♖d3+ ♔e5 80 ♖f3 ♕d2+ 81 ♔f1 d4 82 ♗c4 ♔d6 83 ♖d3 ♕b2 84 ♖h3 ♔e5 85 ♗e2 ♕c1+ 86 ♔f2 ♕c2 87 ♖h5+ ♔d6 88 ♖h6+ ♔c5 89 ♖h5+ ♔b4 90 ♖h3 ♔a3 91 ♖d3 ♔b2 92 ♖xd4? ♕c5 0-1

Game 7
Mortensen-Baburin
Copenhagen 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 c4

5 h3 is very rarely played these days; after 5...♗xf3 6 ♕xf3 dxe5 7 dxe5 e6 the position is known to be very comfortable for Black because of the lack of scope for White's bishops and the weakness of his e-pawn. An example is Zhuravlev-Alburt, Daugavpils 1974, which went 8 ♗c4 ♘d7! (I personally would prefer this to 8...♘c6 because it keeps open the option of playing a later ...c7-c6) 9 ♕g3 ♘e7 10 0-0 ♘f5 11 ♕f4 ♗c5 12 ♘d2 ♕h4 13 ♘f3 ♕xf4 14 ♗xf4 ♘d4 when the e5-pawn was a big problem.

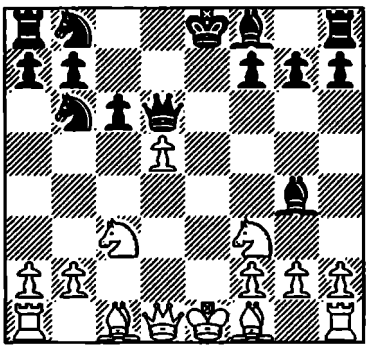


5...♘b6 6 exd6

Transposing into a kind of Exchange Variation, though one in which Black has developed his bishop to g4 rather early.

6 d5 was a speciality of the Latvian player Vitolins; it looks playable and interesting but not dangerous for Black if he knows what he's doing. The most reliable defence is 6...e6 (both 6...dxe5 7 h3 ♗xf3 8 ♕xf3 and 6...♘8d7 7 e6 fxe6 8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 ♘e5 10 ♕b3 exd5 11 cxd5 g6 12 ♘c3 give White reasonable compensation for the pawn) 7 exd6 ♕xd6 (7...♗xd6 is very messy after 8

♕d4! ♗xf3 9 ♕xg7 ♖f8 10 gxf3 ♘8d7 11 ♗g5 ♗e7 12 ♖g1, Vitolins-Bagirov, Jurmala 1985) 8 ♘c3 exd5 9 cxd5 c6 and now:

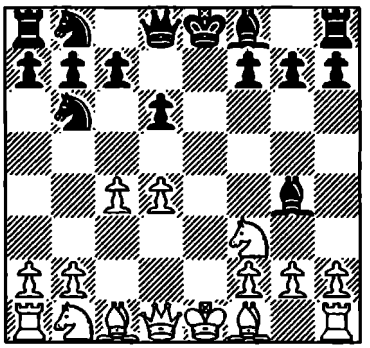


a) 10 h3 ♗h5 11 g4 ♗g6 12 ♗g2 ♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 cxd5 14 0-0 ♗e7 (14...♘c6!?) 15 ♕d4 ♘c6 16 ♕xg7 0-0-0 gave Black good play in Vitolins-Kengis, Riga 1984.

b) 10 ♗e2! (this is stronger) 10...♘xd5 11 ♘d4 ♗e6 12 0-0 ♗e7 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♗h5+ g6 15 ♗g4 ♘xc3 16 bxc3 ♕xd1 17 ♖xd1 ♘a6 18 ♗xe6 ♘c5 was okay for Black in Vitolins-Kengis, Jurmala 1985.

Alekhine himself played 6 ♗e2 on several occasions, though this should amount to no more than a transposition into normal lines after either 6...c6 or 6...e6. The move with independent significance is 6...dxe5 7 ♘xe5 (Alekhine played 7 c5 e4 8 cxb6 exf3 9 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 in an earlier game against Euwe, but in his notes pointed out that Black should have answered this with 10...♘c6) 7...♗xe2 8 ♕xe2 ♕xd4 (Alekhine-Reshevsky, Kemeri 1937). Now Alekhine felt that he should have played 9 ♘a3! (in the game he played 9 0-0 and after 9...♘8d7 had to exchange off one of his attacking pieces with 10 ♘xd7) 9...♘8d7 (or 9...e6 10 ♘c2) 10 ♘f3 with good play for the pawn.

6...exd6



7 ♘c3 ♗e7 8 ♗e3 ♘c6 9 h3 ♗xf3

As White has not castled kingside yet, the plan of a kingside pawn storm is something that Black must be very wary of. After 9...♗h5 White can play 10 g4 ♗g6 11 d5 ♘e5 12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 c5 with a strong initiative.

10 ♕xf3 0-0

The attempt to exchange dark-square bishops with 10...♗g5 is embarrassingly answered by 11 ♕e4+.

11 h4

Preventing ...♗g5 and starting a kingside pawn advance.

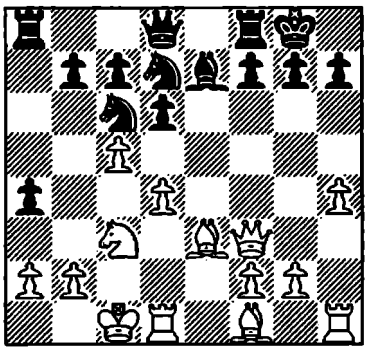
11...a5

Without having a light-squared bishop on the board, 11...d5? is very bad for Black because of 12 c5 ♘c4 13 0-0-0 and the d5-pawn is lost (Wedberg-Sandstrom, Stockholm 1998).

An idea worth considering is 11...♘a5 12 b3 c6 (maybe even 12...♘c6!?, arguing that the weakening of White's queenside with b2-b3 is an achievement), after which Mortensen gives 13 ♗d3 d5 14 c5 ♘d7 15 ♕f5!?

g6 16 ♕h3 with attacking chances.

12 0-0-0 a4 13 c5! ♘d7



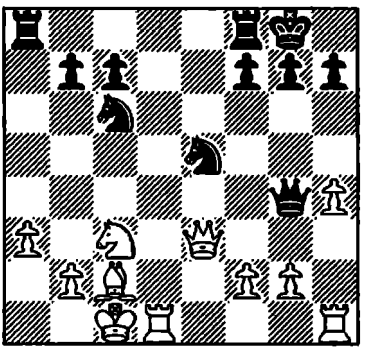
14 a3?!

After this Black can equalise with accurate play. Mortensen claimed that he could have kept a slight edge with 14 cxd6 ♗xd6 (or 14...cxd6 15 a3 ♖c8 16 ♔b1 ♘b6 17 ♗d3 d5 18 h5 threatening 19 ♕f5) 15 a3 ♘b6 16 ♗d3 ♕e7 17 ♘b5, stopping any sacrifices on a3 and keeping a useful bishop pair.

14...dxc5 15 dxc5 ♕c8

Calmly evacuating the d-file after which he can feed his knights to the e5-square and the c5-pawn is weak.

16 ♗b5 ♗xc5 17 ♗xa4 ♘de5 18 ♕e4 ♗xe3+ 19 ♕xe3 ♕g4 20 ♗c2



20...♖ad8

Snatching a pawn with 20...♕xg2? would be bad for Black because of 21 f4 ♘g4 22 ♕d3 ♘f6 23 ♖hg1 ♕f2 24 ♘d5 (Mortensen).

21 f4 ♘g6 22 g3 ♘ge7 23 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ ½-½

Summary

Whilst 4...♗g4 remains more or less playable, it has come under pressure from so many different directions that I find it very difficult to recommend. For anyone playing White I'd suggest adopting either Mortensen's 5 c4 or Bologan's 9 d5. If Black plays the Flohr Variation with 5...c6 then Ernst's 6 c4 ♘b6 7 ♘g5!? looks very promising.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 *(D)*

5 c4 – *Game 7*

5...e6

5...c6 – *Game 6*

6 0-0

6 h3 ♗h5 7 c4 ♘b6 8 exd6 cxd6 9 ♘c3 ♗e7 10 d5 *(D)* – *Game 4*

6...♗e7

6...♘c6 7 c4 ♘b6 8 exd6 cxd6 9 d5 – *Game 5*

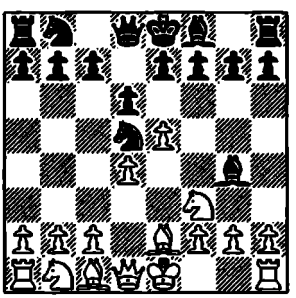
7 c4 ♘b6 8 ♘c3

8 h3 ♗h5 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♗e3 d5 11 c5 ♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♘c8 – *Game 2*

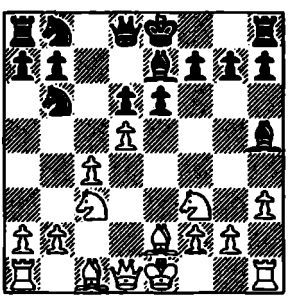
8...0-0 9 ♗e3 d5 *(D)*

9...a6 – *Game 3*

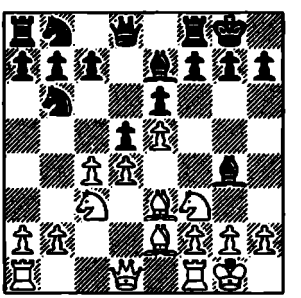
10 c5 ♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♘c8 – *Game 1*



5 ♗e2

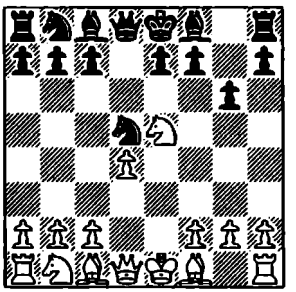


10 d5



9...d5

CHAPTER TWO



Classical Kengis System: 4...dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6

In the Kengis Variation Black solves the problem of the cramping e5-pawn in the simplest and most direct way. He simply removes it from the board! Whilst classical theories about the centre maintain that the resulting 'little centre' formation gives White a space advantage, in practice it is no simple matter for White to do anything with it.

The position could be compared with lines of the Caro-Kann in which Black plays ...dxe4 (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 etc.). On the face of it White's outpost on the half-open e-file is more valuable than the d5-point on the half-open d-file. Yet Black's position is incredibly solid and by challenging the knight on e5 he will probably force it to retreat with a loss of tempo. Meanwhile Black will attempt to free his position with ...c7-c5 or sometimes even ...e7-e5.

The main line of the Kengis is 6 ♗c4, though this may be at least partly due to the fact that Black can also reach a Kengis set-up via 4...g6 5 ♗c4 c6 followed by a later ...dxe5. Black obtains excellent counterplay with a timely exchange of his light-squared bishop followed by playing for the freeing ...c6-c5. Games 8-11 show the kind of play that might arise.

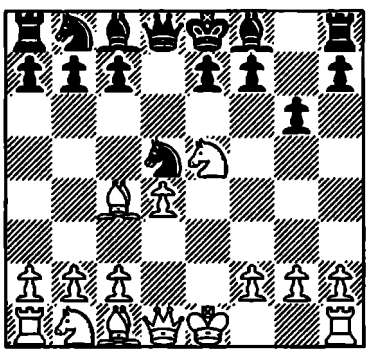
Games 13-15 illustrate aggressive attempts by White to use the knight on e5 as the basis for ambitious and forceful play. Frankly I find it difficult to believe in the merits of the primitive-looking 6 ♕f3 (Game 15) but the space-gaining 6 c4 (Games 13-14) needs very accurate handling by Black. This may be a strong argument in favour of a 4...g6 5 ♗c4 c6 move order.

Game 8
Mukhametov-Bagirov
Bern 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 ♗c4

This has become established as the main line though it's by no means clear that it's White's best move in this spe-

cific position. One of the reasons it might have gained widespread acceptance is the fact the positions it leads to can be reached by transposition from 4...g6 5 ♗c4 c6. Many white players may want to cut down their workload by playing just one set-up against both of Black's move orders.



6...c6

Black has to be careful to protect the knight on d5. 6...♗g7?? loses to 7 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 8 ♕f3+ ♔e6 9 ♕e4+ etc.

Having said that Black does have another move in 6...♗e6 and after 7 ♘c3 (given an exclamation mark by most sources) to play 7...c6 (after 7...♗g7?! 8 ♘e4 White threatens to put his knight on g5 and 8...♗xe5 9 dxe5 ♘c6 10 b3! ♘xe5 11 ♗b2 f6 12 ♗xe5 fxe5 13 ♘c5 wins back the pawn with a huge advantage). After 7...c6 White has a choice:

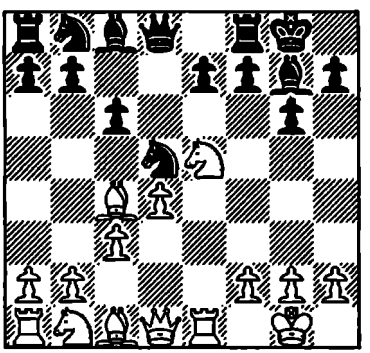
a) The immediate 8 ♘e4 can be answered by 8...♘c7, when Godena-Vaganian, Reggio Emilia 1994/95 went 9 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 10 ♕f3 f6 11 ♕b3 ♕d5 12 ♕xb7 ♕xe4+ 13 ♗e3 ♗g7 14 ♕xa8 fxe5 15 ♕xb8+ ♔f7 16 ♕b4 ♕xg2 17 0-0-0 exd4 18 ♗d2 ♕d5 19 ♕b3 ♖d8 and Black has good compensation, even in the endgame.

b) 8 ♕f3 ♗g7 9 ♘e4 (9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♘d7 11 h3 ♘xe5 12 dxe5 ♘xc3 13 ♕xc3 ♗xc4 14 ♕xc4 ♕d5 was equal in Hort-Panchenko, Bern 1992) 9...0-0 10 0-0 and now Psakhis's recommendation of 10...♘c7 (10...♘d7 is also playable) 11 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 12 c3 ♕d5 looks fine for Black.

7 0-0 ♗g7

Black has also tried 7...♘d7 8 ♘f3 ♘7b6 9 ♗b3 ♗g4 but the knight on b6 is not very well placed. The point is that Black will usually want to advance his queenside pawns in this type of position, to compliment the activity of his bishop on g7.

8 ♖e1 0-0 9 c3



9...♗e6

Black has a major alternative in 9...♘d7 after which Ostojic-Bagirov, Neu Isenburg 1992 continued instructively with 10 ♘f3 (exchanging knights with 10 ♘xd7 eases Black's position) 10...♘7b6 11 ♗f1 ♗g4 12 ♘bd2 e6 (with the light-square bishop exchanged, Black puts his pawns on light-squares) 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♘xf3 ♖c8 (playing for ...c6-c5) 15 c4 ♘e7 16 b3 ♘f5 17 ♗e3 and now Black should probably play 17...♘xe3 (in the game

his 17...c5 was met by 18 ♗g5 ♗f6 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 dxc5 ♖xc5 21 ♕d2 with an edge for White) 18 fxe3 c5 when Black has excellent counterplay.

10 ♘d2

10 ♗b3 transposes into the next game, Howell-Kengis.

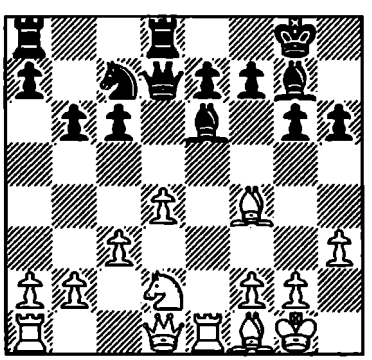
10...♘d7 11 ♘xd7

The exchange of knights definitely eases Black's game and 11 ♘df3 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♘c7 is also fine for Black. Of the alternatives, 11 ♘ef3 ♗g4 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 e6 leads to play similar to Ostojic-Bagirov in the note to Black's 9th, whilst 11 ♘d3 ♘c7 lets Black exchange bishops.

11...♕xd7 12 ♘e4 b6 13 h3

A slightly more testing way for White to play it is with 13 ♘g5, after which van der Wiel-Bagirov, Yerevan 1996 continued 13...♗f5 14 h3 f6 15 ♘f3 ♖ae8 16 ♗f1 ♗e6 17 c4 ♘c7 18 ♗f4 ♗f7 19 ♕a4 ♘e6 20 ♗e3 ♖c8 21 ♖ad1 ½-½. The way Bagirov regrouped his forces in this game was very interesting and in the final position it is difficult for either side to make any significant progress.

13...♘c7 14 ♗f1 h6 15 ♗f4 ♖fd8 16 ♘d2



After this Black has to be very careful.

16...♘d5?!

Bagirov suggested that the immediate 16...c5 would have been better; White would be unable to answer with 17 ♘b3 because Black can take it and the capture on d4.

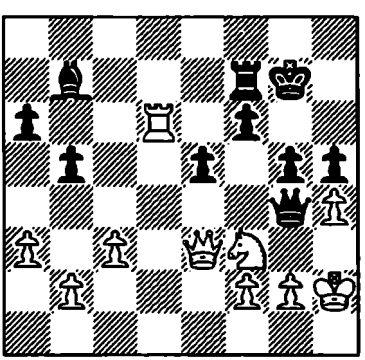
17 ♗g3 c5 18 ♘b3! ♕c8 19 ♕e2 cxd4 20 ♘xd4 ♗d7 21 ♕f3 e6 22 ♖ad1 a6 23 ♗d3 ♖a7 24 ♗c2 b5 25 ♗h4 ♖e8 26 ♗b3 ♘b6

Finally Black is out of the woods and can claim full equality, if not more. He is starting to take some space on the queenside and his central pawn majority later comes into play.

27 ♗f6 ♘c4 28 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 29 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 30 ♕e3 ♕c7 31 ♖d2 e5

Now I definitely prefer Black; the knight has difficulty finding a good post.

32 ♘f3 ♗c8 33 ♖d5 f6 34 a3 ♕f7 35 ♖ed1 ♖ae7 36 ♖d8 ♗b7 37 ♖1d2 ♖xd8 38 ♖xd8 ♕a2 39 ♖d2 ♕b1+ 40 ♔h2 ♕f5 41 ♖d6 ♖f7 42 ♘g1 h5 43 ♘f3 g5 44 h4 ♕g4



45 ♘e1

Time-trouble? After 45 hxg5 ♗xf3 46 ♕xf3 (and not 46 gxf6+? ♖xf6 47 gxf3 ♕h4+ 48 ♔g2 ♖xd6 etc.)

46...♕xf3 47 gxf3 fxg5 48 ♖xa6 ♖xf3 it should probably be a draw.

45...♖d7 46 ♖xd7+ ♕xd7 47 ♕c5 ♔g6 48 ♕e3 ♕d5 49 ♕d3+ ♕xd3 50 ♘xd3 a5 51 ♘c5 ♗c6 52 g3 f5 53 ♔h3 0-1

This was probably on time. Black is definitely better here but White can certainly play on.

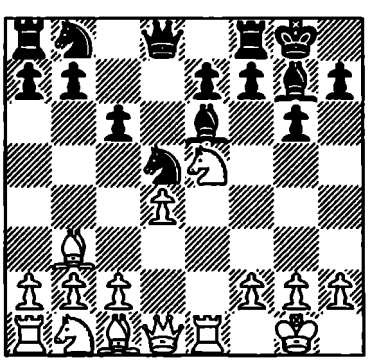
Game 9
J.Howell-Kengis
London 1991

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 ♘f3 d6 4 d4 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 ♗c4 c6 7 0-0 ♗g7 8 ♖e1 0-0 9 ♗b3

White's most popular choice at this juncture, which keeps the option of pushing his c-pawn two squares instead of one and avoids Black winning a tempo with ...♘b8-d7-b6 in some lines.

9...♗e6

Black can also play 9...♘d7 but after 10 ♘f3 ♘7b6 (Bagirov has suggested 10...a5) White can prevent ...♗g4 with 11 h3 and leave Black struggling to find a plan. For 9...a5 see the next game, Short-Agdestein.



10 c3

Of White's other possibilities at this point, 10 h3 is sensible as after 10...♘d7 11 ♘f3 Black cannot pin the knight on f3 with ...♗g4. On the other hand he can try to exchange light-squared bishops with 11...♘c7. White's critical reply is 12 c4 (12 ♘c3 ♗xb3 13 axb3 ♘e6 was very comfortable for Black in Del Rio Angelis-Soppe, Santa Clara 2000; after 12 c3 ♗d5 13 ♗g5 ♘e6 14 ♗e3 {Zso. Polgar-Kengis, Vienna 1991} Black should play 14...♘b6 with equality, according to Kengis) after which I like 12...♘b6 13 ♕e2 a5 14 a4 ♘c8, intending either ...b7-b5 or ...♘c8-d6-f5.

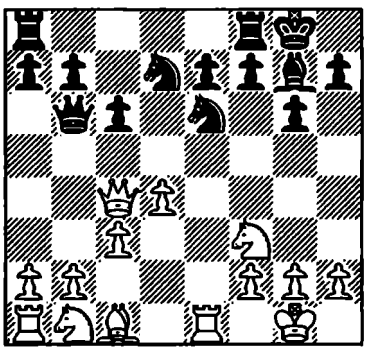
After 10 ♘d2 Black once again sets out to exchange a pair of minor pieces with 10...♘d7 11 ♘ef3 (or 11 ♘df3 ♘xe5 12 dxe5 a5 13 c3 ♗g4 with a comfortable game) 11...♘c7 (11...♗g4 is also possible; after 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♘xf3 Bagirov suggested the line 13...a5 14 ♗g5 ♖e8 15 c4 ♘5b6 with counterplay for Black), when Christiansen-Kengis, Manila Olympiad 1992 continued in interesting fashion with 12 c3 (12 ♘c4 a5 13 a4 ♗d5 was also fine for Black in Milos-Llanos, San Luis 1995) 12...c5 13 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 14 d5 ♘c7 15 ♘e4 ♘f6 16 c4 (after 16 ♘xc5 ♘cxd5 17 ♘xb7 there is 17...♕b6) 16...♘xe4 17 ♖xe4 e6 18 ♗g5 f6 19 d6 ♘e8 20 ♖xe6 fxg5 21 ♕d5 ♔h8 22 ♖ae1 ♘f6 23 ♕xb7 ♕b6 24 ♖e7 ♕xb7 25 ♖xb7 ♖fe8 and White had enough compensation for his piece, but probably not more than that.

10...♘d7 11 ♘f3 ♘c7

As usual 11...♗g4 is very reasonable for Black. Wahls-Maus, Hamburg 1991 continued 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 e6 14 ♘d2 b5 15 ♘e4 a5 16 a4 ♕b6 17 ♘d6

with a fighting game in which White's chances may be slightly preferable.

12 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 13 ♕b3 ♕b6 14 ♕c4?!



White is following some old theory, but in doing so he is drifting into trouble. Volzhin suggested just 14 ♘bd2 with equality.

14...c5!

Opening lines, which certainly makes sense for the side with the better development.

15 d5

Or 15 dxc5 ♘dxc5 with play on the d- and c-files and a juicy d3-square waiting for his knight.

15...♘c7 16 ♖xe7 ♕d6 17 ♖e1 ♕xd5 18 ♘a3 ♘b6!

The last time Kengis reached this position he was White against Tseshkovsky in Riga 1981. On that occasion his opponent played 18...♕xc4?! and after 19 ♘xc4 stood much worse. Kengis plays a much better move, simply keeping White's knight on a3 out of the game.

19 ♕xd5

Avoiding the exchange of queens also leaves White in trouble. After 19 ♕h4 ♖fe8 he will have trouble developing his queenside because of the pressure against the a2-pawn.

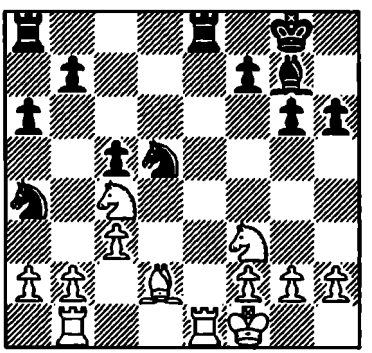
19...♘cxd5 20 ♗g5 h6! 21 ♗d2

White may have been hoping to play 21 ♗e7 but then 21...♖fc8 22 ♖ad1 ♖c6! (threatening ...f7-f6 followed by ...♔f7) 23 ♗h4 f5 puts White's bishop in trouble.

21...♘a4! 22 ♖ab1 ♖fe8!

And not 22...♖fd8 because White can then eject the knight from a4 with 23 ♖e4.

23 ♔f1 a6 24 ♘c4



24...b5?!

Kengis later felt that 24...♖xe1+ 25 ♘xe1 b5 26 ♘e3 ♖d8 would have been more precise. In playing the immediate ...b7-b5 he might have missed the fact that 25...♘f4 did not work.

25 ♘e3

After 25 ♘ce5 Black has a strong move in 25...♖e6.

25...♖ed8

Perhaps now Black saw that 25...♘f4 is answered by 26 ♘f5! when suddenly White manages to free his position. White now has a fleeting moment in which he might have eased the defence. When he misses it Kengis gives him little in the way of further opportunities.

26 ♖ec1?!

White had to play 26 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 27 ♖ec1 with good chances of saving the game. He soon regrets the opportunity to exchange this knight as it promptly heads for the e4-square.

26...♘f6! 27 c4 ♘e4 28 ♖c2 ♖d3 29 ♗e1 ♖e8 30 ♘d2 ♘d6! 31 ♔e2

After 31 ♘b3 there is 31...♖dxe3! 32 fxe3 ♘xc4 with White's pawns dropping like flies, whilst 31 b3 ♘c3 is really excruciating.

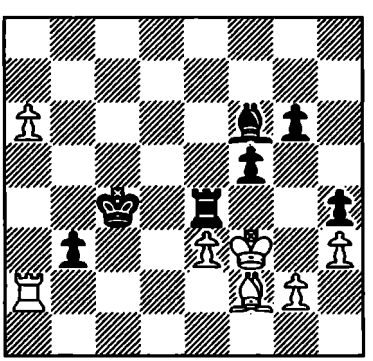
31...♖dxe3+! 32 fxe3 ♘f5 33 ♗f2 ♘d4+ 34 ♔d1 ♘xc2 35 ♔xc2 f5 36 a3 ♔f7 37 b3 ♘c3 38 ♖f1 h5 39 h3 ♘e4 40 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 41 cxb5?

41 ♔d3 would have been more tenacious.

41...axb5 42 ♖d1 ♗h6! 43 ♔d3 ♔e6 44 ♔e2 ♗g5! 45 ♔f3 h4 46 ♖d2 ♗f6 47 ♖a2 ♔d5 48 a4 b4! 49 a5 c4 50 bxc4+

After 50 a6 cxb3 51 a7 ♖e8 52 a8♕+ ♖xa8 53 ♖xa8 b2 Black gets a new queen.

50...♔xc4 51 a6 b3



52 ♖a4+

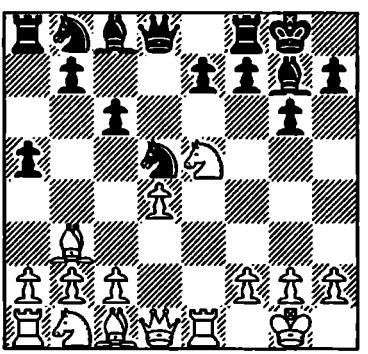
There is no longer any defence. After 52 a7 bxa2 53 a8♕ a1♕ White will run out of checks, and 52 ♖a5 b2 53 a7 b1♕ threatens mate with 54...♕d1.

52...♔b5 0-1

In the line 52...♔b5 53 ♖xe4 fxe4+ 54 ♔e2 Black queens first and delivers mate with 54...b2! 55 a7 b1♕ 56 a8♕ ♕d3+ 57 ♔e1 ♗c3.

Game 10
Short-Agdestein
Isle of Lewis (rapid) 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 ♗c4 c6 7 ♗b3 ♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖e1 a5



Immediately setting about his space-gaining operations on the queenside.

10 c3

There is an alternative in 10 a4 but then 10...♗e6 11 c3 ♕c7 12 ♘d3 ♘d7 13 ♘d2 ♖fe8 14 ♘e4 h6 15 ♕f3 ♗f5 16 ♗d2 ♕b6 17 ♗c2 ♖ad8 18 ♖e2 ♘7f6 brought about exchanges and equality in Godena-Kveinys, European Team Ch., Debrecen 1992.

10...♗f5

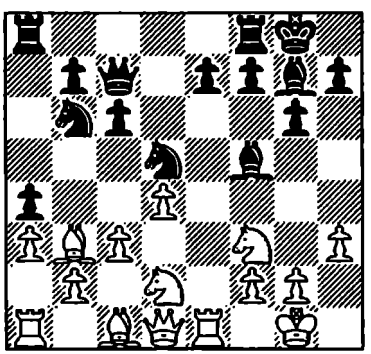
I'm not sure that I like the bishop on this square but it certainly worked in this particular game. In Korchnoi-Vaganian, Horgen 1995 Black played the more natural-looking 10...♘d7 with

the game going 11 ♘f3 ♘7b6 12 a4 ♕c7 (12...♗g4 is possible) 13 ♗g5 ♗g4 14 ♘bd2 c5 (one of Black's key levers) 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 e6 17 c4 (starting a sequence which wins material but cripples White's queenside) 17...♘b4 18 ♗f4 ♕c6 19 ♕xc6 bxc6 20 dxc5 ♘d7 21 ♗d6 ♘d3! 22 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 23 ♖e2 ♖b8 24 ♖b1 ♘7xc5 25 ♗c2 ♘xb2 with excellent compensation for the exchange.

11 h3

In Arnason-Knezevic, Grindavik 1984 White played 11 ♘d2 and after 11...♘d7 12 ♘ef3 Black could consider 12...♗g4 (in the game he played 12...♘7f6 13 a4 ♕c7 14 ♘c4 ♖ad8 with an okay position) 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♘xf3 e6 with a typical position for this line in which both sides have chances.

11...♘d7 12 ♘f3 ♘7b6 13 a3 ♕c7 14 ♘bd2 a4



15 ♗a2

After 15 ♗c2 ♗xc2 16 ♕xc2 c5 Black would stand very well because of his active pieces and the weaknesses in White's queenside pawn structure.

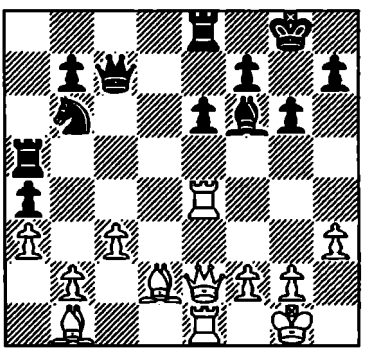
15...c5 16 dxc5 ♕xc5 17 ♘e4 ♗xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♖fd8 19 ♕c2

White would have liked to play 19 ♕e2 but then 19...♗xc3! 20 bxc3 (or 20 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♖c4 ♕b5 22 bxc3 ♘xc3 etc.) 20...♘xc3 21 ♕e1 ♖d1 is simply terrible.

19...e6 20 ♗g5 ♖dc8 21 ♖ae1 ♕a5 22 ♕e2 ♖e8

Being wary of any combinations based on ♖xe6.

23 ♗d2 ♕c5 24 ♘e5 ♕c7 25 ♘g4 ♘f6 26 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 27 ♗b1 ♖a5!



A nice way to bring the rook into play.

28 h4 ♕c6 29 g3 ♗e7 30 ♗f4 ♘d7 31 ♗c2 ♗c5 32 ♗g5 ♔g7 33 ♕d2 f6 34 ♗h6+

34 ♖d1 ♘b6 35 ♗h6+ has been recommended, but Black is fine there too after 35...♔f7 36 c4 ♖aa8 etc.

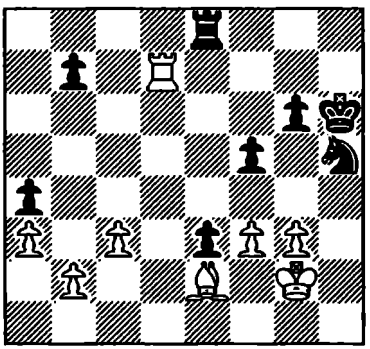
34...♔f7 35 h5?! f5 36 ♖h4 ♘f6 37 hxg6+ hxg6 38 ♗e3 ♗xe3 39 ♕xe3 ♖aa8

39...e5 looks better, as now White should take the opportunity to put his queen on that square. The remainder of the game was played under quite serious pressure from the clock.

40 ♗d1?! e5 41 ♗f3 e4 42 ♗e2 ♖ad8 43 ♖h6 ♖h8 44 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 45 ♖d1 ♔g7 46 ♕f4 ♖e8 47 ♕d6 e3 48 f3?

The losing move. White has to play 48 ♕xc6 bxc6 49 ♗f3 with a draw as the likely outcome.

48...♕xd6 49 ♖xd6 ♘h5 50 ♖d7+ ♔h6 51 ♔g2



51...f4 52 gxf4 ♘xf4+ 53 ♔f1 ♔g5 54 ♖xb7 ♖h8 0-1

After 55 ♖b5+ ♔f6 56 ♖b6+ ♔e5 57 ♖b5+ ♔d6 Black's king escapes the checks and 58 ♖g5 is met by 58...♖h2 59 ♖g4 ♖f2+ etc.

Game 11
Nijboer-Vaganian
Dutch League 2001

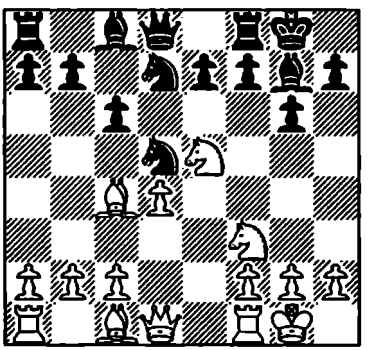
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 ♗c4 c6 7 ♘d2

The knight comes to the support of its compatriot on e5. 7 0-0 ♗g7 8 ♘d2 is less precise as after 8...♘d7 White cannot play 9 ♘d3 because his d-pawn would hang.

7...♗g7

Black can also regroup with 7...♗e6 8 ♘e4 ♘c7, before White is ready to meet ...♗e6 with ♘g5. Egger-Petrov, World Junior Ch., Buenos Aires 1992 continued 9 ♗e2 ♗d5 10 ♗d3 ♗g7 11 0-0 0-0 12 c3 ♘d7 13 f4 ♗xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♘f6 15 ♗d3 e6 with a very solid position and chances to get counterplay with a later ...c6-c5.

8 ♘df3 0-0 9 0-0 ♘d7



10 ♘d3

The most difficult move for Black to meet; White avoids any freeing exchanges and posts the knight on a square from which it inhibits ...c6-c5. After 10 ♖e1 ♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 (11 dxe5 ♗g4 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 e6 14 ♗b3 ♕c7 15 ♕e4 ♖ad8 followed by doubling rooks on the d-file gave Black a very easy game in Magomedov-Kengis, Frunze 1989) 11...♗e6 Black has a very comfortable game, for example:

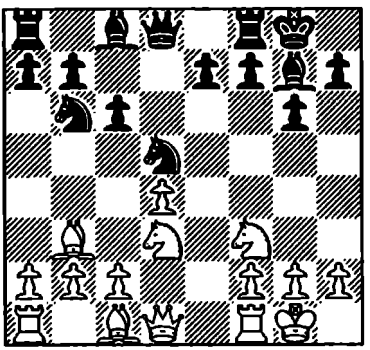
a) Adams-Agdestein, Oslo 1994 continued 12 ♗b3 a5 13 c3 ♕c7 14 ♘d3 ♗f5 15 ♗g5 ♖fe8 16 ♕d2 a4 with Black already starting to take the initiative.

b) The bishop is not very well placed on b3 so it might be better to play 12 ♗f1 ♕c8 13 ♗d2 ♖d8 14 c3 with equality, as in Conquest-Maus, Copenhagen 1990.

c) On the other hand 12 c3 allows Black a some tactics with 12...♗xe5! 13 dxe5 ♘xc3! 14 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 15 ♗xe6 ♘e2+ 16 ♔f1 ♘xc1 17 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18

♖axc1 ♔e6 with much the better rook endgame.

10...♘7b6 11 ♗b3



11...♗g4?!

This may not be the best and I tend to agree with Burgess's sentiment that Black should probably want to exchange the d3-knight. For this reason 11...a5 12 a4 ♗f5! is probably better, after which Arnason-Kengis, Jurmala 1987 continued 13 ♖e1 ♗xd3 14 ♕xd3 e6 15 ♗g5 ♕c7 (after eliminating the d3 knight, Black will find it easier to play ...c6-c5) 16 ♕e4 ♘c8 17 c4 ♘d6 18 ♕e2 ♘b4 19 ♖ad1 ♖fe8 20 ♕d2 ♘f5 with excellent counterplay.

12 c3 e6

12...a5 would give rise to similar play to the game.

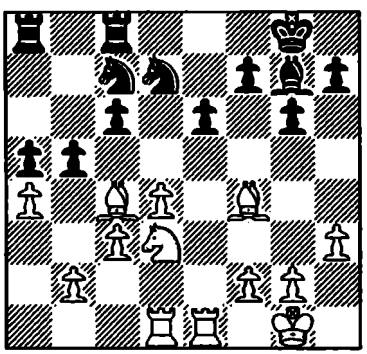
13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♘d7 15 ♕g3

There is a major alternative in 15 ♖e1, after which Kolev-Panchenko, Villalba 1996 continued in somewhat artificial vein: 15...a5 (15...b5 16 g3 a5 17 a3 ♖e8 18 h4 h5 19 ♗g5 ♗f6 20 ♗d2 a4 21 ♗a2 ♕e7 was an earlier Panchenko game as Black against Kruppa from the 1990 Ukrainian Championship; no doubt he got the idea to play ...e6-e5 after this encounter) 16 a4 ♕b6 17 ♗c4 ♖ae8?! 18 ♖e2 ♕d8 19 ♗d2 and now 19...e5? 20 ♗xd5 cxd5 21 ♕xd5 exd4 22 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 23 cxd4 ♘b6 24 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 25 ♗xa5 left Black a pawn down.

15...a5 16 a4 ♖e8 17 ♖e1 ♕b6 18 ♗c4 ♕c7

The knight on d3 is making life difficult for Black. If 18...c5? there is 19 ♗b5, winning a pawn. Black decides to bail out into an endgame in which the bishops slightly favour White.

19 ♕xc7 ♘xc7 20 ♗f4 ♖ec8 21 ♖ad1 b5!?



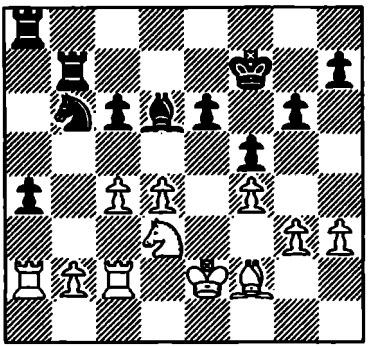
Despite the dangers posed by the bishops, Vaganian plays in aggressive and double-edged fashion. Obviously there are deep risks associated with this kind of play and Vaganian has to walk the tightrope in the later stages of this game.

22 ♗b3 ♗f8 23 ♖a1 ♘d5 24 ♗g3 ♖a7 25 ♖e2 ♖ca8 26 f3 ♖b7 27 ♗f2 ♖c7 28 g3 ♘5b6 29 ♔g2 ♘xa4

I'm not sure Black should have done this as his queenside pawns are now split. He probably got tired of waiting; in any case this isn't much for White.

30 ♗xa4 bxa4 31 ♖xa4 ♘b6 32 ♖a2 a4 33 f4 ♗d6 34 ♖c2 ♖b7 35

♔f3 f5 36 ♔e2 ♔f7 37 c4



It's now quite clear that Black's risky play has backfired. He manages to hang on by the skin of his teeth.

37...♘d7 38 c5 ♗c7 39 ♖c3 ♖ba7 40 ♖ca3 ♘f6 41 ♗e1 ♔e8 42 b3 ♘d5 43 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 44 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 45 bxa4 ♔d7 46 ♘b2 h5 47 ♘c4 h4 48 ♔f3 hxg3 49 ♗xg3 ♔c8 50 ♘b2 ♗d8 51 ♗f2 ♔b7 52 ♘c4 ♗f6 53 ♗e3 ♔a6 54 ♔e2 ♗g7 55 ♔d3 ♘b4+ 56 ♔d2 ♘d5 57 ♔d3 ♘b4+ 58 ♔d2 ½-½

Game 12
Miles-Pons
Andorra 1996

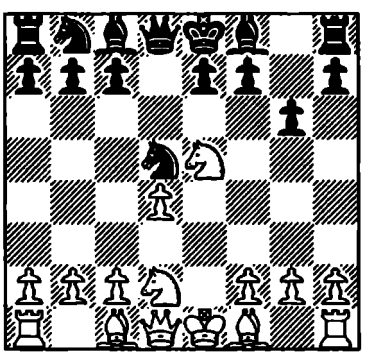
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 ♘d2

With a huge slab of irony, Miles awarded this move two exclamation marks in *Informator 67* and splattered more exclamation marks over the rest of the game. Later on he switched sides and showed how to equalise with the black pieces.

Another quiet line is 6 g3 and now:

a) Plaskett-Hillarp Persson, St Helier 1999 continued 6...♘d7!? 7 ♘f3 (7 ♗g2 ♘xe5 8 dxe5 c6 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 ♕e2 ♗e6 11 b3 ♕c8 12 ♗b2 ♗h3 was equal in Wolff-De Firmian, New York 1996) 7...♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 c5 10 ♖e1 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘e5 12 ♘a3 ♗g4 13 ♘f3 e6 14 c4 ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♘b4 16 ♗xb7 ♘bd3 and Black won this wild game, though it's anybody's guess what's happening at present.

b) There's nothing wrong with the 'standard' 6...♗g7 either, after which 7 ♗g2 0-0 8 0-0 c6 9 ♖e1 ♗f5 10 c3 ♘d7 11 ♘f3 ♖e8 12 ♘bd2 was Anand-Adams, Linares (1st matchgame) 1994, and now Black should have played 12...e5 13 ♘c4 ♗g4 with close to complete equality.



6...♗g7

Once again it's possible to play 6...♘d7, after which 7 ♘xd7 ♕xd7!? 8 ♘f3 ♗g7 9 ♗e2 ♕d6 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖e1 c5 12 dxc5 ♕xc5 13 c4 ♘b4 14 a3 ♘c6 15 b4 was a bit better for White in Ricardi-Speelman, FIDE World Ch., Las Vegas 1999.

7 ♘df3

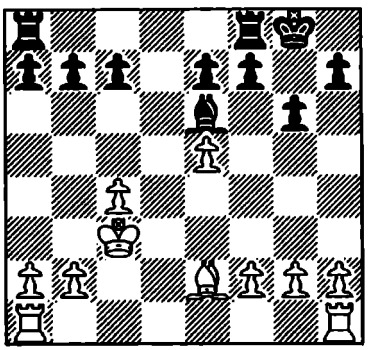
7 ♗c4 0-0 8 ♘df3 c6 9 0-0 ♘d7 would have transposed into the previous game, Nijboer-Vaganian.

7...0-0 8 c4 ♘b6 9 ♗e2 ♘8d7 10

♗f4 ♘xe5

When Miles played Black in this position (Kofidis-Miles, Agios Nikolaos 1997) he preferred 10...c5 and got slightly the better of it after 11 d5 ♘xe5 12 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♕d6 14 ♘f3 e6 etc. The implication is that 6 ♘d2 doesn't refute the Kengis Variation after all.

11 ♘xe5 ♘d7 12 ♕d2 ♘xe5 13 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 14 dxe5 ♕xd2+ 15 ♔xd2 ♗e6 16 ♔c3

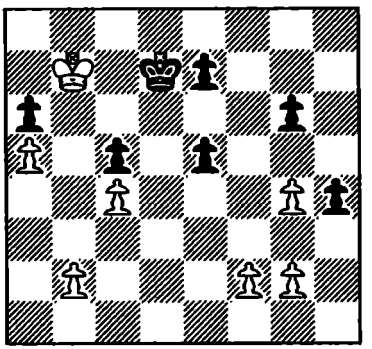


In the endgame, White's active king and greater control of terrain give him a clear edge.

16...f6 17 ♗f3 c6 18 ♖he1 ♔f7 19 a4 ♖ad8 20 a5 a6 21 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 22 ♗xd1 ♖d8 23 ♗f3 ♗f5 24 ♔b4 ♖d3 25 ♔c5 ♖b3 26 ♖e2?

The move which allows Black to escape. According to Miles he should have first played 26 exf6, after which 26...exf6 (26...♖xb2 27 ♖xe7+ ♔xf6 28 ♖xh7 also wins for White) 27 ♖e2, followed by ♖d2 and ♗d1, will win easily enough.

26...fxe5 27 ♖d2 ♔e6 28 ♗e2 h5 29 h3 h4 30 ♗d1 ♖d3 31 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 32 ♗g4+ ♗f5 33 ♔b6 ♗xg4 34 hxg4 ♔d7 35 ♔xb7 c5!



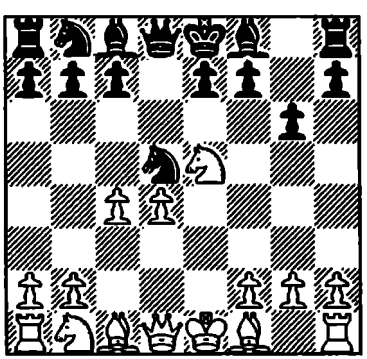
36 b4

Surprisingly the pawn endgame is a draw. Miles gave the variation 36 ♔b6 ♔d6 37 f3 g5 38 b3 e6 39 ♔xa6 ♔c6 40 ♔a7 ♔c7 41 a6 e4 42 fxe4 e5 43 ♔a8 ♔c8 with no further progress possible.

36...cxb4 37 c5 b3 38 c6+ ♔d6 39 c7 b2 40 c8♕ b1♕+ 41 ♔a7 ♕b5 42 ♕xa6+ ♕xa6+ 43 ♔xa6 ♔c6 44 f3 g5 45 ♔a7 ♔c7 46 ♔a6 ♔c6 47 ♔a7 ♔c7 ½-½

Game 13
J.Polgar-Agdestein
Isle of Lewis (rapid) 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 c4



A tough line for Black to meet. White takes the lion's share of the centre and puts the onus on Black to find decent counterplay.

6...♘b6 7 ♘c3 ♗g7 8 ♗e3

In the game Gallagher-Kengis, Bern 1992 White varied with 8 ♗f4 0-0 9 ♗e2 a5!? 10 h4?! (simply 10 0-0 is better), after which 10...♘c6! left White struggling for equality. The game continued 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♗e5 ♗xe5 13 dxe5 ♗e6! 14 b3 ♕xd1+ 15 ♖xd1 a4 and now, according to Volzhin, 16 0-0 was probably the best chance as after 16...axb3 17 axb3 ♖a3 18 ♖b1 ♗xc4 19 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 20 bxc4 ♖xc3 21 ♖fc1! ♖xc1+ 22 ♖xc1 White should be able to draw.

8...0-0

The alternatives are 8...c5, 8...♘c6 and 8...♗e6, all of which will be looked at in the next game.

9 ♕f3

A typical Judit Polgar move, intending to castle long.

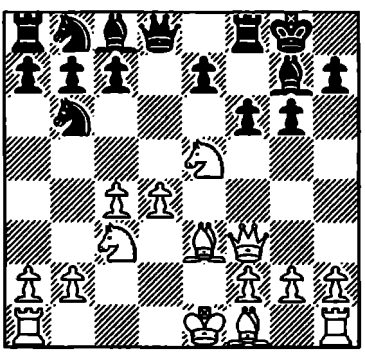
Another sharp move is 9 f4, supporting the knight on e5:

a) Gdanski-Tomaszewski, Naleczow 1988 continued 9...♘6d7 10 ♕f3 c5 11 0-0-0 ♕a5 12 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 13 ♗f2 ♖b8 14 ♗e2 and now 14...b5!? looks interesting (in the game Black played 14...cxd4 15 ♗xd4 e5 16 fxe5 ♘xe5 but was slightly worse after 17 ♕d5).

b) Another possibility is 9...c6, after which Pokojowczyk-Tomaszewski, Polish Ch. 1980 continued 10 ♕f3 f6 11 ♘g4 ♗e6 12 b3 ♗xg4 13 ♕xg4 f5 14 ♕g3 e6 15 ♖d1 ♕e7 16 ♗e2 ♘8d7 17 0-0 a5 with counterplay on the queenside.

White's other possibility is 9 ♖c1, after which Grischuk-Baburin, Torshavn 2000 went 9...c5!? (9...♗f5 is also possible but relatively passive) 10 ♗e2 cxd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗h6 12 ♖a1 f6 13 ♘g4 ♗xg4 14 ♗xg4 ♘c6 15 ♗c5 ♘e5 16 ♗e6+ ♔g7 17 ♘d5 ♘xd5 18 cxd5 ♕a5+ 19 b4 ♕a6 20 ♕e2 ♘d3+ 21 ♔f1 ♘xc5 22 bxc5 and now 22...♕a5 looks interesting (in the game Baburin was much worse after 22...♕xe2+ 23 ♔xe2 b6 24 c6 ♗f4 25 ♔d3).

9...f6



10 ♘d3

10 ♘xg6 doesn't work after 10...hxg6 11 c5 ♘6d7! 12 ♗c4+ ♖f7 (and not 12...♔h7? 13 ♕h3+ followed by mate).

10...e5!

Quite right. Black has the better development so he opens the game up.

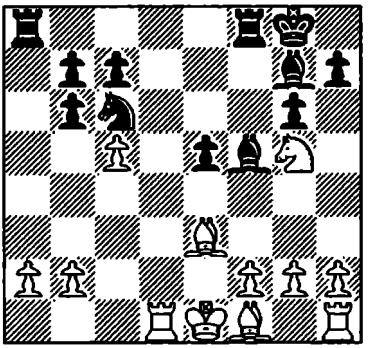
11 dxe5 fxe5 12 ♕d1 ♘c6 13 ♘c5 ♕e8

A slightly odd-looking move, though it turns out to be okay. Black can also put his knight in the middle with 13...♘d4. In any case he has an excellent game.

14 ♘d5 ♕f7 15 ♘e4 ♗f5 16 ♘g5 ♕d7 17 ♘xb6 ♕xd1+ 18 ♖xd1 axb6 19 c5

Opening up the c4-square for the

bishop. Accurate play by both sides results in perpetual check.



19...h6

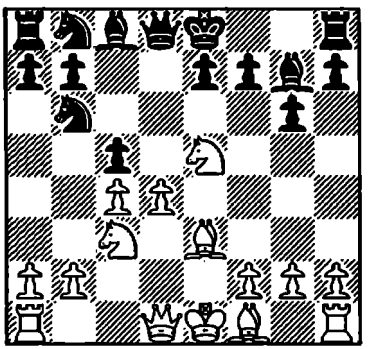
Obviously not the rash capture 19...♖xa2? because of the forking reply 20 ♗c4+.

20 ♗c4+ ♔h8 21 h4! b5 22 ♘f7+ ♔h7 23 ♘g5+ ♔h8 24 ♘f7+ ♔h7 25 ♘g5+ ½-½

Game 14
Ernst-Bagirov
Helsinki 1992

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 c4 ♘b6 7 ♘c3 ♗g7 8 ♗e3 c5

8...♘c6 is a known idea, allowing doubled pawns but eliminating the knight on e5. Unfortunately it doesn't seem to work after 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 ♕d2 a5 11 ♗e2 a4 12 ♖d1 0-0 13 ♗h6 when White was much better in Ivanov-Men, US Ch., Durango 1992. 8...♗e6 is a solid move but does little to challenge White's space advantage. Bode-Kengis, German Bundesliga 1991 continued 9 f4 c6 10 ♕b3 0-0 11 ♗e2 ♘8d7 12 0-0 ♘f6 13 ♖ad1 with the better game for White.



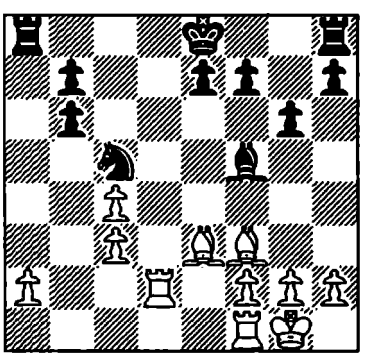
9 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 10 ♖xd1 ♗xe5 11 cxb6 ♗xc3+

Black should take the chance to double White's pawns. After 11...axb6 12 ♗d4 ♗xd4 13 ♖xd4 White was much better in Campora-Abreu, Las Palmas 1993.

12 bxc3 axb6 13 ♖d2 ♘d7 14 ♗e2 ♘c5 15 0-0 ♗f5

15...0-0 might be an improvement for Black, but this endgame is worse for him in any case.

16 ♗f3



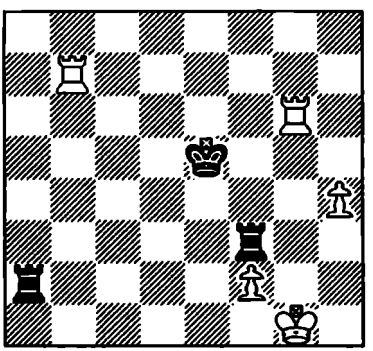
16...♗e4??

A blunder. Black should play 16...0-0 after which 17 ♖b2 ♖a6 18 ♗xc5?! (18 ♖d1) 18...bxc5 19 ♖xb7 e6 leaves him without further problems.

17 ♗xc5 ♗xf3 18 ♗d4 e5 19 ♗xe5 f6 20 ♖e1 fxe5

Black has little choice but to jettison pawns and hope he can hang on. 20...0-0 21 ♗d6 would win the exchange.

21 ♖xe5+ ♔f7 22 gxf3 ♖hc8 23 ♖d7+ ♔f6 24 ♖b5 ♖xc4 25 ♖xb6+ ♔g5 26 ♖xh7 ♖xc3 27 h4+ ♔f5 28 ♖f7+ ♔e5 29 ♖xg6 ♖xa2 30 ♖e7+ ♔d5 31 ♖d7+ ♔e5 32 ♖xb7 ♖xf3



Sometimes you can't win rook endgames with extra f- and h-pawns, but in this case Black's king has to go too far away.

33 ♖b5+ ♔d4 34 ♖g4+ ♔c3 35 ♖g2 ♔c4 36 ♖bg5 ♖a1+ 37 ♔h2 ♖f1 38 h5! ♖f6

It turns out that Black can't get his pawn back. White wins easily after 38...♖1xf2 39 h6 ♖xg2+ 40 ♔xg2 ♖f6 41 ♖h5 ♖f8 42 h7 ♖h8 43 ♔f3 etc.

39 ♔g3 ♔d4 40 ♔g4 ♔e4 41 ♖g6 ♖1xf2 42 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 43 ♖e6+

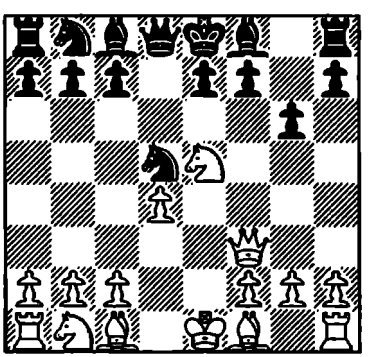
Cutting Black's king off. White's h-pawn carries the day...just!

43...♔d5 44 ♖e8 ♖h2 45 ♔g5 ♔d6 46 h6 ♖g2+ 47 ♔f6 ♖f2+ 48 ♔g7 ♖g2+ 49 ♔h8 ♔d7 50 ♖g8 ♖h2 51 h7 ♔e6 52 ♔g7 ♖g2+ 53 ♔f8 ♖f2+ 54 ♔e8 ♖a2 55 ♖g6+ ♔f5 56 ♖f6+ ♔g5 57 ♖f8 1-0

Game 15
Ernst-Josefsson
Swedish Ch., Karlskrona 1983

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 ♕f3

One of White's two most bludgeoning moves. The other one is 6 h4?!, which is well met by 6...♘d7 7 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 8 h5 ♗g7 9 c3 c5 10 dxc5 ♕c6 11 ♘d2 ♗f5 as in Reeh-Loeffler, Amstelveen 1994. Undaunted by this earlier experience, Reeh later tried 6 ♗c4 c6 7 h4?! against Maus in the 1992/93 German Bundesliga season. Once again Black had a good game after 7...♘d7 8 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 9 h5 ♗g7 10 c3 ♕c7 11 ♘d2 0-0-0 12 ♘e4 e5 etc.



6...♗e6

In my view this is an only move. If Black has to play the ugly 6...f6 he can forget about the Kengis Variation altogether.

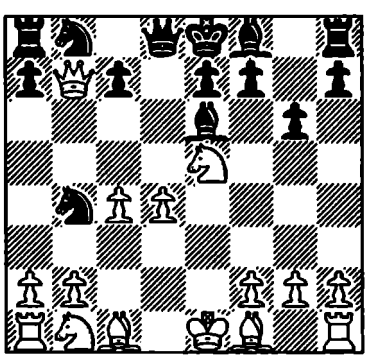
7 c4

The critical line. If White plays 7 ♗c4 there follows 7...♗g7 (7...c6 8 0-0 ♘d7 9 ♘c3 ♗g7 10 ♖d1 ♗xe5 11 ♗xd5

♗xd5 12 ♘xd5 ♗g7 was also very comfortable for Black in Sherzer-Panchenko, Chicago 1992) 8 ♘c3 (8 0-0 c6 9 ♖e1 ♘d7 10 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 11 c3 0-0 12 ♗g5 ♖fe8 13 h3 ♘c7 14 ♘d2 ♗d5 15 ♗xd5 cxd5 and Black had an excellent game in Luther-Bagirov, Leningrad 1989) 8...c6, which transposes into the 6...♗e6 note in Mukhametov-Bagirov (see Game 8).

7...♘b4 8 ♕xb7

White has an interesting alternative in 8 d5!?. Vilar Lopez-Regan, Saint Vincent 1999 continued 8...♘c2+ 9 ♔d1 ♘xa1 10 ♘d2 ♗f5 (and not 10...♗g7 11 dxe6 0-0 because of 12 exf7+ ♔h8 13 ♘xg6+ hxg6 14 ♕h3+ ♗h6 15 ♕xh6 mate) 11 ♗d3. Now Black should play 11...♘d7 (in the game Black played 11...♕d6 and after 12 ♘xf7!? ♔xf7 13 g4 Black should still have played 13...♘d7), after which 12 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 13 g4 is bad because of 13...♘e5 etc.

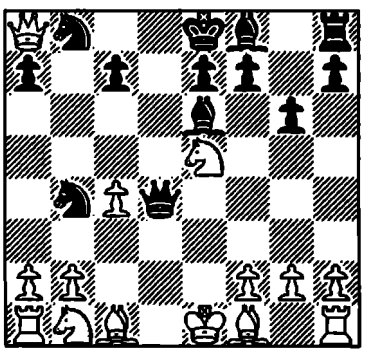


8...♕xd4!

This feels right to me; it keeps Black's pieces centralised and all his options open. 8...♘c2+ 9 ♔d1 ♘xa1 10 ♕xa8 ♗g7 11 ♗d2 (11 ♕b7, mentioned by Fleck, is another idea for White) 11...c5!? is the other possibility and looks massively complicated.

9 ♕xa8

White has to take the rook if he wants anything out the opening. 9 ♕xb4 ♕xe5+ 10 ♗e2 ♘d7 11 ♘c3 ♗g7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♗e3 ♖ab8 gave Black excellent play in Ziska-Flindtholt, Festuge 1991.



9...♕xe5+!

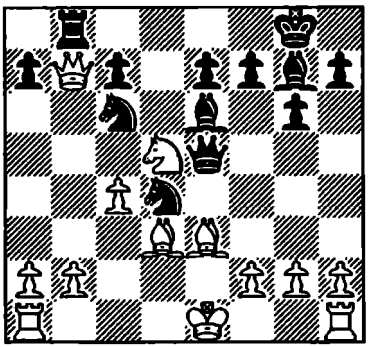
In *New Ideas in the Alekhine Defence* Burgess only mentions 9...♘c2+. I like the knight where it is because it can now keep White's queen out of play. Meanwhile Black will race ahead with the rest of his development, with good compensation for the exchange because White's king is in the middle.

10 ♔d1 ♘4c6 11 ♘c3

Kavalek cops out of assessing this position by calling it 'unclear'. I'll stick my neck out and claim that Black is better. It's only an exchange and Black is developing a massive attack.

11...♗g7 12 ♗e3 0-0 13 ♕b7 ♖d8+ 14 ♔e1 ♘d4 15 ♗d3 ♘bc6 16 ♘d5 ♖b8?

A serious mistake. Black should play 16...♗xd5 17 cxd5 ♕xd5 with excellent play for the exchange.



17 ♕a6?

White in turn misses his chance. He can simply play 17 ♘xe7+! ♘xe7 (or 17...♔f8 18 ♘xc6) 18 ♕xb8+, winning on the spot.

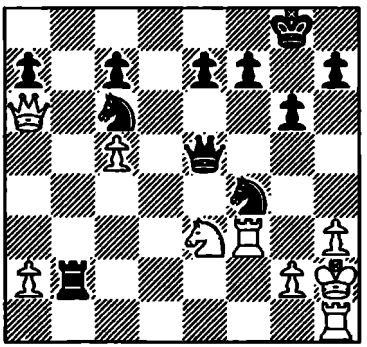
17...♗h6 18 ♔f1 ♗xe3 19 ♖e1 ♗f5 20 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 21 ♘xe3

After 21 ♖xe3 there is a good old fashioned mating combination with 21...♕b1+ 22 ♖e1 ♕d3+ 23 ♔g1 ♘e2+ 24 ♔f1 (or 24 ♖xe2 ♕d1+ etc.) 24...♘g3+ 25 ♔g1 ♕f1+ 26 ♖xf1 ♘e2 mate.

21...♕d3+ 22 ♔g1 ♖xb2 23 h3 ♕d2 24 ♖f1 ♘e2+ 25 ♔h2 ♕d6+ 26 f4

Ernst is fighting for his life. 26 g3 ♘xg3 is not an improvement.

26...♘xf4 27 c5 ♕e5 28 ♖f3



28...♕xe3

This certainly ought to be good enough but 28...♘xg2+ butchers White on the spot.

29 ♖hf1 ♖xg2+ 30 ♔h1 ♖g1+?

A jolly amusing way to draw a winning position. 30...♕d2 is decisive.

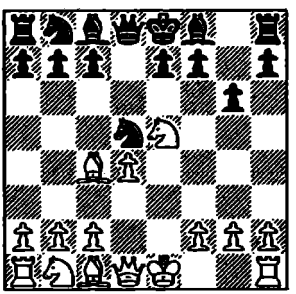
31 ♔h2 ♖g2+?

And here 31...♕d2+ 32 ♖1f2 ♖g2+ wins.

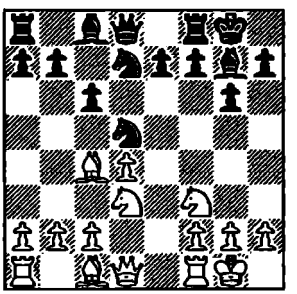
32 ♔h1 ♖g1+ 33 ♔h2 ♖g2+ ½-½

Summary
The Kengis Variation has become the workhorse of most of the Alekhine professionals. The primitive 6 ♕f3 looks very dangerous for White and against 6 ♗c4 Black gets a solid position with fighting chances. My greatest concern is about the 6 c4 lines, but Black can actually sidestep these by adopting a 4...g6 5 ♗c4 c6 move order.

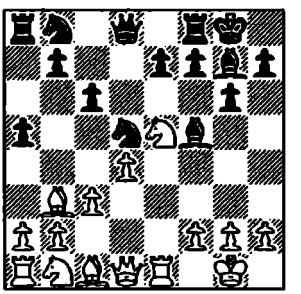
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 ♗c4 *(D)*
6 ♕f3 – *Game 15*
6 ♘d2 ♗g7 7 ♘df3 0-0 8 c4 – *Game 12*
6 c4 ♘b6 7 ♘c3 ♗g7 8 ♗e3
8...0-0 – *Game 13*
8...c5 – *Game 14*
6...c6 7 0-0
7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 ♘df3 0-0 9 0-0 ♘d7 10 ♘d3 *(D)* – *Game 11*
7...♗g7 8 ♖e1 0-0 9 ♗b3
9 c3 – *Game 8*
9...a5
9...♗e6 – *Game 9*
10 c3 ♗f5 *(D)* – *Game 10*



6 ♗c4

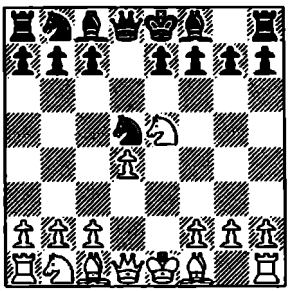


10 ♘d3



10...♗f5

CHAPTER THREE



Classical with 4...dxe5 5 ♘xe5: 5...♘d7 and 5...c6

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5

From a structural point of view, the positions that arise here bear an obvious similarity to the Kengis Variation. Once again it brings about a 'little centre' structure in which Black plays for an eventual ...c6-c5 to free his position. The difference is that he is not necessarily committed to a kingside fianchetto.

An immediate challenge on White's knight on e5 with 5...♘d7 invites a scary sacrifice on f7. Black's king gets caught in the centre but Games 16 and 17 show that he has many defensive resources. I even wonder whether White should sacrifice the knight at all; a more circumspect choice would be the quiet retreat back to f3.

Black can eliminate these dangers by first defending the knight on d5 with 5...c6. Britain's Tony Miles has been making a living out of this move and it is most definitely a tough nut to crack. The game can easily transpose back into a Kengis Variation if Black plays a later kingside fianchetto, which is in fact what happens in Games 19, 21 and 22. But given a chance, Black can also adopt a set-up in which he develops his queen's bishop (...♗g4 for example) and then simply plays ...e7-e6. This plan of development was used in Games 18 and 20.

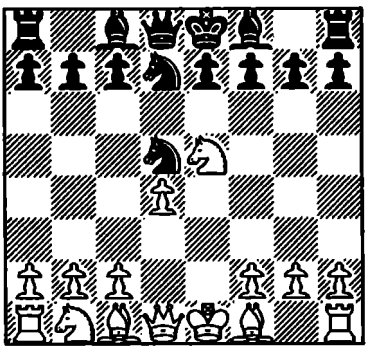
In Game 23 White tries 6 c4, which is certainly a very interesting line for White in the Kengis Variation. But here Black is not committed to a kingside fianchetto and Miles was doing well in this game. Very well, even.

Game 16
Rozentalis-A.Sokolov
Bern 1992

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 ♘d7

As first played by Bent Larsen in his 1965 match against Mikhail Tal. The 'magician from Riga' would have seen the knight sacrifice on f7 in the twinkling of an eye, but strangely enough decided against it. His decision was no

doubt prompted by the thought that Larsen must have analysed the sacrifice at home. After the game analysts pored over the sacrifice and Tal was criticised for having avoided what was probably a 'winning' line. But more than twenty years later, the English amateur Peter Sowray started playing 5...♘d7, and suddenly people weren't quite that sure.



6 ♘xf7!?

Tal played 6 ♗c4 after which van der Wiel's suggestion of 6...♘xe5 7 dxe5 c6 8 ♕f3 ♕c7 may be Black's best.

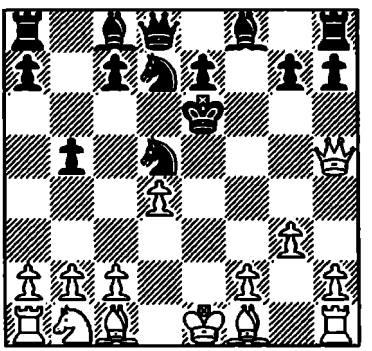
Many strong practical players have decided simply to avoid an exchange of their knight on e5 with 6 ♘f3, after which 6...e6 (6...c5 7 c4 ♘5f6 8 d5 ♘e4 9 ♗d3 ♘d6 10 0-0 g6 11 ♖e1 ♗g7 12 ♗g5 ♘f6 13 ♘c3 was also nice for White in Pavosovic-Hillarp Persson, European Team Ch., Batumi 1999) 7 g3 ♗e7 (7...b6 8 c4 ♘5f6 9 ♗g2 ♗b7 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♗f4 was also slightly better for White in Psakhis-Komarov, Benasque 1995) 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 c5 10 c4 ♘5f6 11 ♘c3 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 gave White had a comfortable edge in Groszpeter-Pitschka, Pardubice 2000.

6...♔xf7 7 ♕h5+ ♔e6

The only move. 7...♔g8?? 8 ♕xd5+ leads to mate and 7...g6 8 ♕xd5+ wins a pawn for nothing.

8 c4

During the Larsen game, Tal spent some time analysing 8 g3 but the position is far from clear after 8...b5! and now:

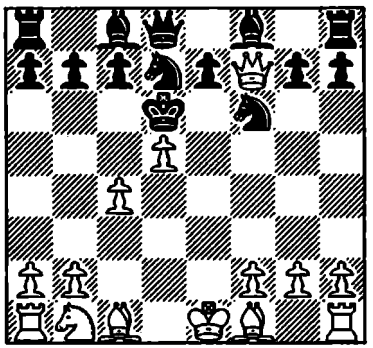


a) 9 b3 b4 10 a3 ♘7f6 11 ♗h3+ ♔d6 12 ♕e5+ ♔c6 13 ♗g2 was played in Angelov-Orev, correspondence 1961, and now Black should have defended himself with 13...♕d6!.

b) 9 a4 c6! (Greiner-Sowray, correspondence 1988 varied with 9...♗b7 10 ♗h3+ ♔d6 11 ♕f7 c5 12 ♘c3 ♘xc3 13 ♕e6+ ♔c7 14 ♗f4+ ♔c8 15 bxc3 g5, but now 16 dxc5 gxf4 17 0-0-0 would have won on the spot; Burgess has suggested 9...b4 but this awaits practical tests) 10 axb5 g6 11 ♕e2+ ♔f7 12 bxc6 ♘7b6 13 ♗g2 was played in Ernst-Komarov, Dortmund 1992, and now 13...♗g7! 14 c4 ♘b4 15 d5 ♗f5 16 ♗e4 ♗xe4 17 ♕xe4 ♘4xd5! would have equalised according to Ernst.

One practical drawback of 5...♘d7 is that White can take a draw by repetition at this point with 8 ♕g4+ ♔f7 9 ♕h5+ etc.

8...♘5f6 9 d5+ ♔d6 10 ♕f7



The obvious move is 10 ♗f4+? but then 10...e5! 11 c5+ (11 dxe6+ ♔xe6 leaves White with nothing) 11...♔e7 12 ♗g5 ♕e8 consolidates for Black.

10...♘e5

Putting the knight in the centre is thought to be the best, though in such a complex position it is difficult to be totally confident about this.

The main alternative is 10...♘b8, after which 11 c5+ ♔d7 (11...♔xc5 12 ♗e3+ ♔d6 13 ♘a3! a6 14 ♘c4+ ♔d7 15 d6! wins) 12 ♗f4 (12 ♗b5+ c6 13 dxc6+ bxc6 14 0-0 is unconvincing after 14...♕a5! 15 ♖d1+ ♔c7 16 ♗f4+ ♔b7 etc.) 12...♕e8 13 ♕e6+ ♔d8 14 ♕e5 ♕d7 15 ♘c3 ♘g4 16 ♕e2 ♕f5 17 ♕d2 ♘e5 (both 17...g5 and 17...♘d7 are worth considering) 18 0-0-0 ♘bd7 19 c6 gave White dangerous compensation for the piece in Kopec-Sowray, correspondence 1990-92.

The other move is 10...♘b6 but this also looks good for White after 11 ♘c3 ♕e8 12 ♗f4+ ♔d7 13 ♕e6+ ♔d8 14 ♕e5 ♕d7 15 0-0-0 ♘g4 (after the passive 15...♘e8 White plays 16 ♗d3! ♘d6 17 c5 ♘f7 18 ♕e3 g5 19 ♗g3 ♗g7 20 ♗b5!, followed by 21 ♖he1, with an overwhelming position) 16 ♕e1 ♕f5 17 ♗g3 g6 18 ♗d3 ♗h6+ 19 ♔b1 ♕f6 20 h3 and White was winning in Nguyen-Miroshnichenko, Budapest 1999.

11 ♗f4 c5

Forced, in view of the threat of 12 c5+.

12 ♘c3

White has also tried 12 ♘d2 but then 12...g5! (and not 12...♕e8? 13 ♘e4+) 13 ♗g3 g4 14 0-0-0 ♗h6 15 ♖e1 ♖f8 16 ♗xe5+ ♔d7 17 ♕e6+ ♔e8 18 ♕d6! exd6 19 ♗xf6+ ♔d7 20 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 brings about an equal position according to Bagirov.

The other try is 12 b4!?, which we'll look at within the context of the next game.

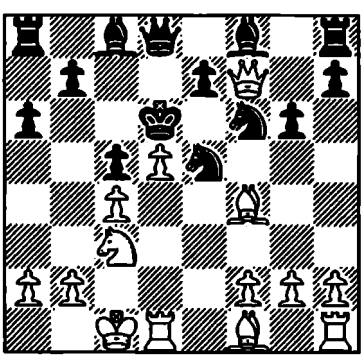
12...a6

Black had to defend b5 and 12...♗d7? would be a blunder because of 13 ♘b5+ ♗xb5 14 ♕e6+ etc.

13 0-0-0

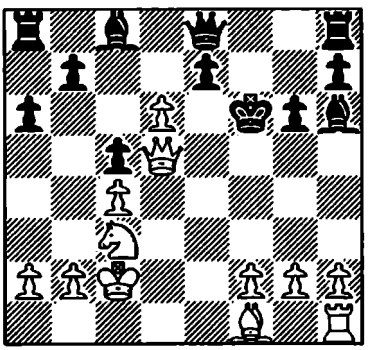
This fails because of Black's crafty reply, which exploits the position of White's king on c1. For this reason Yudasin suggested 13 ♖d1 rather than 13 0-0-0. White's main alternative is 13 b4, which will be covered in the next game.

13...g6!



Suddenly endangering White's queen with the threat of 14...♗h6.

14 ♗xe5+ ♔xe5 15 d6 ♗h6+ 16 ♔c2 ♕e8! 17 ♖d5+ ♘xd5 18 ♕xd5+ ♔f6



19 ♗d3

Rublevsky-Hauchard, Oakham 1992 varied from this with 19 ♘e4+ ♔g7 20 ♕e5+ ♔f7 (and not 20...♔g8? 21 ♘f6+) 21 ♗d3 (21 dxe7 is answered by 21...♗f5 22 ♗d3 ♕xe7 23 ♘d6+ ♕xd6 24 ♕xd6 ♖ad8) 21...♗g7 (21...♗f5 22 g4 ♗xe4 23 ♗xe4 e6 24 ♖e1 ♕a4+ 25 ♔d3 ♖he8 26 h4 0-1 was De Firmian-Rohde, US Ch. 1989; did Rublevsky have an improvement ready?) 22 ♕f4+ ♔g8 23 ♖e1 ♕f8 24 ♕g5 exd6 25 ♕d5+ ♕f7 26 ♘xd6 ♕xd5 27 ♖e8+ ♗f8 28 cxd5 c4 29 ♗xc4 b5 30 ♗b3 ♔g7 31 ♘xc8 ♗c5 32 ♖e7+ ♔h6 0-1.

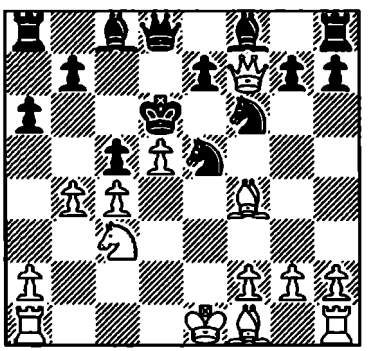
19...exd6 20 ♕xd6+ ♔f7 21 ♘e4 ♕c6 22 ♕e5 ♖d8 0-1

Game 17
Mysliwiec-Krzyzanowski
Correspondence 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 ♘d7 6 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 7 ♕h5+ ♔e6 8 c4 ♘5f6 9 d5+ ♔d6 10 ♕f7 ♘e5 11 ♗f4 c5 12 ♘c3

White has also played the immediate 12 b4 but this seems to give Black an additional defensive possibility in 12...♕b6 13 ♘c3 ♕xb4 (13...a6 would transpose back into the game). Batakovs-Aleksandrovs, Latvia 1991 continued 14 ♖c1 g5 15 ♗xe5+ ♔xe5 16 ♗d3 ♔d6 17 0-0, followed by 18 ♖fe1, with a strong attack.

12...a6 13 b4



13...♕b6!

Counterattack proves to be the best form of defence. The cowering 13...b6 is effectively answered by 14 ♖b1 g5 (Bagirov pointed out that 14...cxb4 15 ♖xb4 ♔c5 is answered by 16 ♖b1!! ♘xf7 17 ♘a4+ ♔d4 18 f3 followed by 19 ♖d1 mate) 15 ♗g3 ♗h6 16 bxc5+ bxc5 17 ♖b7! ♗d7 18 ♗d3! ♕e8 (after 18...♖b8 Wolff demonstrated that White can win with 19 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 20 ♘b5+! axb5 21 ♗xe5+ ♔xe5 22 ♕xe7+ ♔d4 23 ♕e3+ ♔c3 24 ♗e2+ ♔b4 25 ♕d2+ followed by mate) 19 ♗f5! ♕xf7 20 ♘e4+ ♘xe4 21 ♖xd7 mate.

Keres pointed out that 13...cxb4? loses to 14 c5+ ♔xc5 15 ♘a4+ ♔d6 16 ♘b2 b5 17 ♘d3 etc.

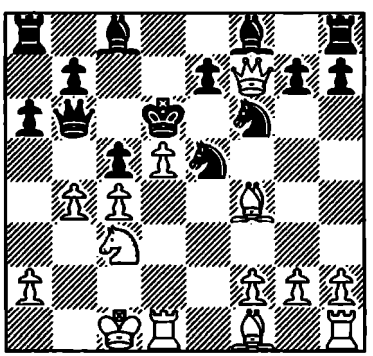
14 0-0-0

At one time it was thought that 14 bxc5+ ♕xc5 15 ♖d1 was strong but this assessment was turned upside down by the game Wydrowski-Krzyzanowski, correspondence 1993. Black uncorked the remarkable 15...♕a3! 16 ♖d3 ♕c1+! 17 ♗xc1 ♘xf7 and went on to win after 18 c5+ ♔c7! (and not 18...♔xc5? 19 ♘a4+ ♔d6 20 ♘b6 ♖b8 21 ♗f4+ ♘e5 22 ♘c4+ etc.) 19 ♗f4+ ♔d8 20 ♘a4 ♗f5 21 ♖d4 ♔e8 22 ♗c4 ♖d8 23 0-0 ♗c2 24 ♘b6 e5 25 d6 ♗xd6 0-1.

White has also played 14 ♖c1 but this can be met by 14...g5 15 ♗g3 (15 ♗xe5+ ♔xe5 16 ♗d3 would be answered by 16...cxb4) 15...h5 and now:

a) 16 ♕g6 ♕xb4 17 ♕xg5 ♘fg4 18 ♕g6+ ♔d7 19 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♕e6+ ♔d8 21 ♕xe5 ♖g8 left White facing the threat of 22 ...♗g7 in Elburg-Krantz, correspondence 1991.

b) Szilagyi-Krantz, correspondence 1992 continued 16 bxc5+ ♕xc5 17 ♕g6 ♕d4 18 c5+ ♔c7 19 ♕xg5 ♘fd7 20 c6 bxc6 21 dxc6 ♗h6 and now White should probably play 22 ♘d5+ ♕xd5 23 cxd7+ ♔xd7 24 ♖c7+! ♔xc7 25 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5+ 26 ♗xe5+ ♔c6 27 ♗xh8 ♗e6, when Black wins his pawn back with a likely draw.



14...cxb4

This is supposed to be an 'only move' but the reason seems to be questionable to say the least. After 14...♕xb4 (supposedly '?') Volzhin has given 15 ♔c2, but then just 15...♗f5+ 16 ♗d3 ♕xc4 looks good for Black.

15 ♘a4 ♕xf2 16 c5+

Gipslis has suggested 16 ♗xe5+ ♔xe5 17 ♗d3, when White intends to bring his other rook into play.

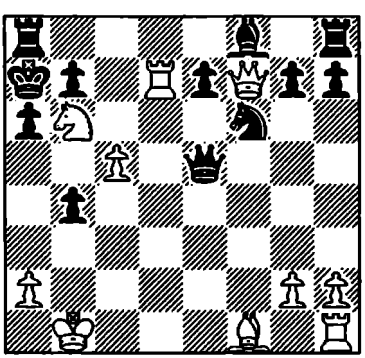
16...♔d7 17 ♗xe5

After 17 c6+ Burgess gives 17...bxc6 (17...♔d8? 18 c7+) 18 dxc6+ ♔xc6 19 ♗xe5 ♕e3+ 20 ♖d2 ♕e1+ 21 ♖d1 ♕e3+ with a draw. Actually, this would have been White's best option; after the move chosen Black's king finds safety.

17...♕e3+ 18 ♔b1 ♕xe5 19 ♘b6+ ♔c7 20 d6+

After 20 ♘xa8+ ♔b8 21 ♘b6 ♗g4! 22 ♘c4 ♕c3 23 ♗d3 ♗xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♕d4 Black is winning.

20...♔b8 21 d7 ♗xd7 22 ♖xd7 ♔a7



Made it! Now it's *White's* king that comes under pressure; he's standing on b1 with the wind in his hair.

23 ♖d1 ♘e4 24 ♘xa8 ♘c3+ 25 ♔c1 ♘xd1 26 ♔xd1 ♕xc5 27 ♗d3 ♔xa8

Black has three extra pawns and White's king is still vulnerable. The rest requires little comment.

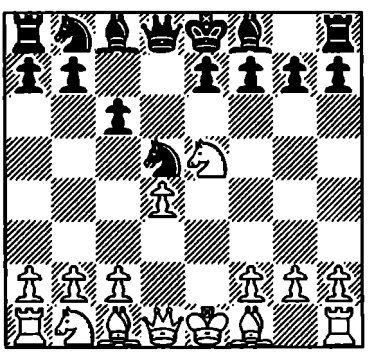
28 ♖f1 e5 29 ♖e1 ♗e7 30 ♕xg7 ♖d8 31 ♔e2 ♕d5! 32 ♖d1

Black has calculated that 32 ♕xe7 is met by 32...♕xg2+ 33 ♔e3 ♕h3+ 34 ♔f2 ♕xh2+ 35 ♔f1 ♖g8 36 ♗g6 ♕f4+ 37 ♔e2 ♖xg6 with the win in sight.

32...♗c5 0-1

Game 18
Van der Weide-Miles
European Ch., Saint Vincent 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 c6



Tony Miles has been playing this a lot; it's a very reasonable move which theory has virtually ignored. Rather than challenge White's knight immediately, Black first protects the horse on d5. This precludes the possibility of a sacrifice on f7.

Bent Larsen also experimented with 5...e6 in his 1965 match against Tal in Bled. After 6 ♕f3 we have:

a) 6...♘f6 was dismissed by the variation 7 ♗e3 ♘bd7 8 ♘c3 ♘xe5? (both 8...♗b4 and 8...♗d6 are better tries) 9 dxe5 ♘d7 10 0-0-0, all of which is very impressive if you play bad moves for Black!

b) Tal-Larsen, Bled (6th matchgame) continued 6...♕f6 7 ♕g3 h6 8 ♘c3 ♘b4 (here Black should consider 8...♗b4 9 ♗d2 ♘d7 which seems to me to be quite playable) 9 ♗b5+ c6 10 ♗a4 ♘d7 11 0-0 (Tal suggested that 11 ♘e4 ♕f5 12 f3 ♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♗d7 14 a3 would also be good for White, which seems true enough at this stage) 11...♘xe5 12 dxe5 ♕g6 13 ♕f3 ♕f5 14 ♕e2 ♗e7 15 a3 ♘d5 16 ♘b5! cxb5 17 ♕xb5+ ♔d8 18 c4 and Tal had conjured up one of his magical attacks.

6 ♗c4

Arguably White's most natural move. 6 ♕f3 ♗e6 7 ♗c4 ♘d7 8 ♘d3 g6 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 c3 0-0 11 ♘d2 was Rabiega-Löffler, Austrian Ch., Melk 1999, and now 11...a5!? looks like Black's most interesting plan.

6...♘d7

Miles has favoured this move though Black has also tried the slightly clunky-looking 6...♗e6.

7 ♘f3

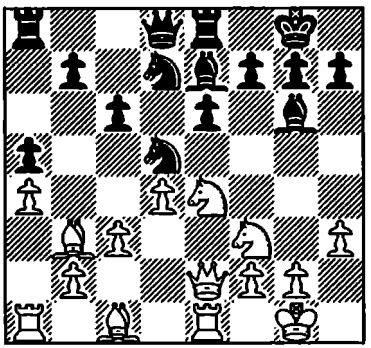
Exchanging knights abandons any hope of obtaining an opening advantage. The game Cao-Miles, European Ch., Ohrid 2001 continued 7 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 8 0-0 ♗f5 9 ♗d3 (or 9 c3 e6 10 ♕e2 ♗d6 11 ♘d2 0-0 ½-½, Kobalija-Miles, Capablanca Memorial, Varadero 2000) 9...♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 e6 11 c4 ♘f6 12 ♘d2 ♗e7 13 ♘f3 0-0 14 ♗d2 ♕c7 15 ♖fe1 ♖ad8 16 ♕e2 ♖fe8 17 ♗c3 ½-½.

7...♘7b6

Intending to develop his bishop on g4. 7...♘7f6 is not as good after 8 h3,

but 7...g6 is worth considering.

8 ♗b3 ♗g4 9 ♘bd2 e6 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 h3 ♗h5 12 c3 0-0 13 ♘e4 ♗g6 14 ♕e2 ♘d7 15 ♖e1 a5 16 a4 ♖e8



Black has a very comfortable position, which sums things up from a theoretical point of view. Over the next few moves Miles aims to free his position with ...e6-e5, this being one of Black's two major pawn levers in such structures (the other is ...c6-c5).

17 ♗c4 ♕c7 18 ♗g5 ♗xg5 19 ♘exg5 h6 20 ♘e4 ♖ad8 21 ♖ad1?!

After this Black is definitely better. White should probably play 21 ♘ed2, applying some restraint to Black's impending ...e6-e5.

21...♘5b6 22 ♗b3 e5 23 ♘g3

After 23 dxe5 ♘xe5 24 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 White would find Black's e-file pressure quite unpleasant.

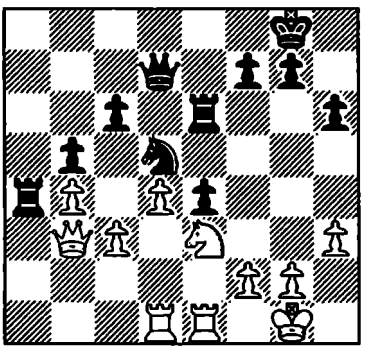
23...e4 24 ♘h4 ♗h7 25 ♕h5 ♘f6 26 ♕xa5 ♖a8 27 ♕c5

After 27 ♕b4 there follows 27...♘fd5 28 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 29 ♕b3 ♕f4, hitting the knight on h4.

27...♘xa4 28 ♗xa4 ♖xa4 29 ♘hf5 ♗xf5 30 ♘xf5 ♖e6 31 b4

Black was ready to meet 31 d5 with 31...♘xd5 32 ♖xd5 b6 etc.

31...b6 32 ♕c4 b5 33 ♕b3 ♘d5 34 ♘e3 ♕d7



35 ♖a1?

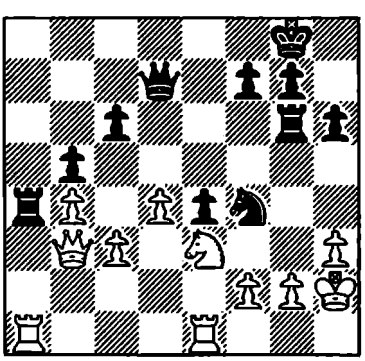
Losing. White had to play 35 ♘xd5 but after 35...cxd5 Black is obviously better because of the weakness of the backward c3-pawn and Black's kingside pawn majority.

35...♖g6 36 ♔h1

If White had chosen 36 ♔f1 Black would launch a similar attack to the game with 36...♘f4 37 ♖xa4 bxa4 38 ♕xa4 ♖xg2! 39 ♘xg2 ♕xh3 etc.

36...♘f4 37 ♔h2

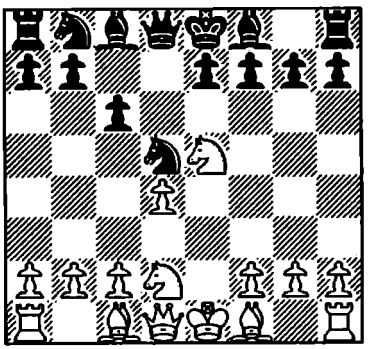
After 37 ♖g1 there follows 37...♘xh3 so White no longer has a reasonable defence.



37...♖xg2+ 0-1

Game 19
Tiviakov-Van der Werf
Dutch Ch., Leeuwarden 2001

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 c6 6 ♘d2



Aiming to maintain his knight on e5, in the hope that this will guarantee a slight space advantage. The drawback is that Black gets to exchange a pair of minor pieces which does relieve his position.

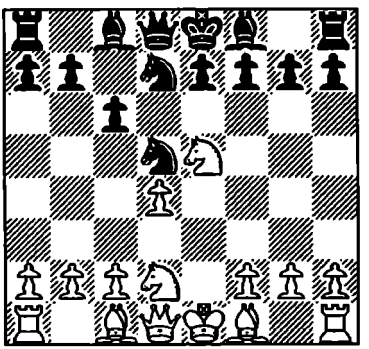
Other possibilities are as follows:

a) 6 c3 g6 7 g3 ♗g7 8 ♗g2 ♘d7 9 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 10 ♘d2 0-0 11 ♘f3 ♕c8 12 0-0 ♗h3 left Black very comfortably placed in Shur-Bagirov, Baku 1996.

b) 6 h3 looks innocuous but the idea is quite good; when Black challenges the knight on e5 White plans to drop it back and not have to worry about a pin. Jansa-Burkar, Bonnevoie 1999 continued 6...♘d7 7 ♘f3 g6 8 ♗c4 ♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1 e6 (the immediate 10...b5 loses a pawn after 11 ♗xd5 cxd5 12 ♘c3) 11 ♗b3 b5 12 ♗g5 ♕c7 13 ♘bd2 ♗b7 14 c4 bxc4 15 ♘xc4 c5 16 ♖c1 and now 16...♖ac8 17 dxc5 ♘xc5 looks fine for Black.

c) 6 ♗d3 ♘d7 7 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 8 0-0 g6 9 ♖e1 ♗g7 10 c3 0-0 11 ♗g5 ♖e8 12 ♘d2 ♕c8 13 ♘e4 ♗f5 left White with nothing special in Macieja-Kuczynski, Polish Ch., Warsaw 2001.

6...♘d7



7 ♘df3

7 ♘d3 would avoid the exchange and the knight is placed on a square from which it inhibits either the ...c6-c5 or ...e7-e5 pawn levers. On the other hand, it stops White's bishop coming out to its most natural posts on either d3 or c4. Black's best is probably 7...g6, after which 8 ♗e2 ♗g7 9 ♘f3 0-0 10 0-0 b6, intending ...c6-c5, looks about equal.

7...♘xe5 8 ♘xe5 g6 9 ♕f3 ♗e6 10 c3 ♗g7 11 ♗e2 a5

One of Black's most common plans, staking out some territory on the queenside. In the game Dutreeuw-Loeffle, Tanta City 2001 Black played 11...0-0 12 ♘d3 ♘f6 13 ♕g3 ♗c4 with a solid position.

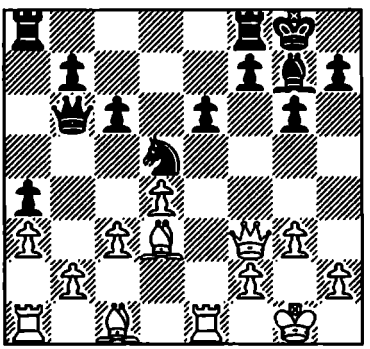
12 0-0 0-0 13 ♘d3 a4 14 a3 ♗f5 15 ♖e1 ♗xd3

Giving up the bishop pair to eliminate the knight that controls the e5 and c5 squares. In the following play White tries to keep Black tied down whilst

gradually trying to weaken Black's king position. Black wants to free his game with an ultimate ...c6-c5 or ...e6-e5, but without allowing White's bishops to become too dangerous. White is slightly better, though it's not very much.

16 ♗xd3 e6 17 g3 ♕b6

17...b5 looks preferable, cementing the position of the knight on d5 before preparing ...c6-c5.



18 h4 h5

I think that Black should avoid this weakening and instead focus on playing ...c6-c5. However, the immediate 18...c5 is bad because of 19 c4 ♘e7 (19...♘f6 20 dxc5 ♕xc5 21 ♕xb7) 20 d5. All of this supports the case for 17...b5.

19 ♔g2 ♖fe8 20 ♖e2 ♘e7 21 ♗g5 ♘f5 22 ♖ae1 ♖a5 23 g4

Starting the process of prising open Black's kingside. This was definitely made easier by Black's 18th move.

23...hxg4 24 ♕xg4 ♕c7 25 ♖g1 ♕d7 26 ♗c2 ♖ea8 27 ♔f1 c5 28 dxc5 ♖xc5 29 h5 gxh5 30 ♕f3 ♔f8 31 ♗d2 ♖d5 32 ♗e1 ♖c8?

Overlooking White's 34th move.

33 ♕g2 ♗f6 34 ♗xa4! b5 35 ♗c2 ♖c4 36 ♕f3 ♖g4 37 ♖xg4 hxg4 38 ♕xg4 ♕c7 39 ♗e4 ♖c5 40 ♗d2 ♕h2 41 ♗f4 ♕h8 42 ♖d2 ♔e7 43 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 44 ♗d6+ ♔e8 45 ♕g2 ♖d5 46 ♖xd5 exd5 47 ♕xd5 ♕h3+ 48 ♔e1 ♕e6+ 49 ♕xe6+ fxe6 50 ♔e2 ♔d7 51 ♗f8 ♔c6 52 ♔d3 1-0

Game 20
Ljubicic-Zelcic
Croatian Ch., Slavonski Brod 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 c6

4...dxe5 5 ♘xe5 c6 6 ♗e2 would transpose back into the game. For more about the independent aspects of 4...c6, see Chapter 4.

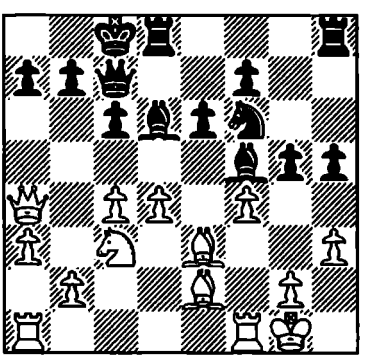
5 ♗e2 dxe5 6 ♘xe5 ♘d7 7 ♘xd7

This gives White nothing, though the way Black creates unbalance in the position is interesting. For 7 ♘f3 see the next two games.

7...♗xd7 8 0-0 ♗f5 9 a3 ♕c7 10 c4 ♘f6 11 ♘c3 e6 12 ♗e3 h5!

The start of an old-fashioned attack on the kingside. The immediate threat is 13...♘g4.

13 h3 ♗d6 14 f4?! 0-0-0 15 ♕a4 g5



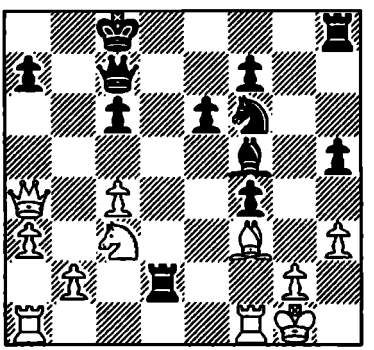
This surprising blow rips open files on the kingside. Black does not bother

to defend a7.

16 d5

White in turn plays for his own attack and the race is on. Capturing on g5 would open the flood gates; after 16 fxg5 there follows 16...♘g4! 17 hxg4 ♗h2+ 18 ♔h1 (18 ♔f2 ♕g3 mate) 18...hxg4 threatening a lethal discovered check.

16...♗xf4 17 ♗xf4 gxf4 18 dxc6 bxc6 19 ♗f3 ♖d2



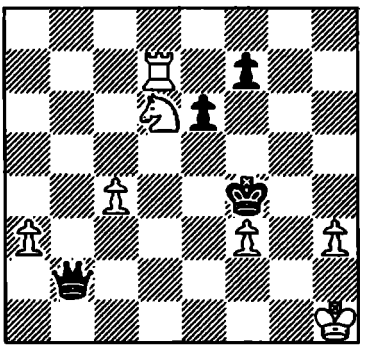
20 ♖ad1?

This looks like a case of desperation. White should go ahead with 20 ♗xc6. Then 20...f3 21 ♗xf3 ♘g4 22 ♗xg4? hxg4 23 ♘b5? ♕c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♖xh3+ 25 gxh3 ♗e4+ is mating, but 22 ♕a6+ ♔d8 23 ♗xg4 hxg4 24 ♖ad1! is totally unclear.

20...♕b6+ 21 ♔h1 ♗c2

Winning material. White gives up the queen in the hope that there's some compensation. But it never looks anything like enough.

22 ♖xd2 ♗xa4 23 ♘xa4 ♕a5 24 ♘c3 ♖d8 25 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 26 ♖d1 ♕b6 27 ♖d6 ♕xb2 28 ♖xc6+ ♔d8 29 ♘b5 ♘d7 30 ♘xa7 ♘e5 31 ♖d6+ ♔e7 32 ♘c8+ ♔f6 33 ♗xh5 f3 34 ♗xf3 ♘xf3 35 gxf3 ♔e5 36 ♖d7 ♔f4 37 ♘d6



37...f5 38 ♘f7 ♔g3 0-1

Game 21
Degraeve-Miles
Mondariz Zonal 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 c6 6 ♗e2 ♘d7

Black does have an alternative here in 6...g6, after which 7 c4 ♘c7 8 ♘c3 (8 ♗e3 ♗g7 9 ♘d2? c5! was good for Black in Gi.Garcia-Miles, Matanzas 1994) 8...♗g7 9 ♗e3 ♘d7 10 f4!? 0-0 11 0-0 ♘xe5 12 dxe5 (12 fxe5 c5) 12...♕xd1 13 ♖axd1 f6 was equal in Dolmatov-Tseshkovsky, Russian Ch., Tomsk 2001.

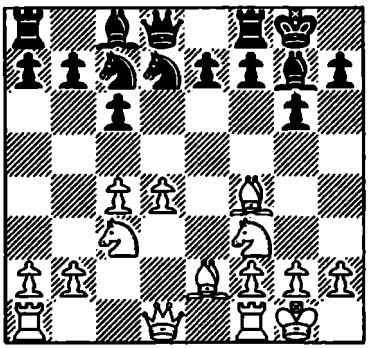
7 ♘f3

Keeping pieces on the board makes sense because White has more space.

7...g6 8 c4 ♘c7 9 ♘c3 ♗g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗f4

Varying from De Firmian-Miles, Chicago 1994, in which Black obtained good counterplay after 11 ♖e1 c5 12 d5 b5! 13 cxb5 ♘b6, when Black recovers the d5-pawn with a good game. Of White's other moves, Black would probably meet 11 ♗e3 with 11...e5 and

11 ♗g5 with 11...c5 12 d5 h6, and if 13 ♗h4 then 13...g5 14 ♗g3 e5 etc.



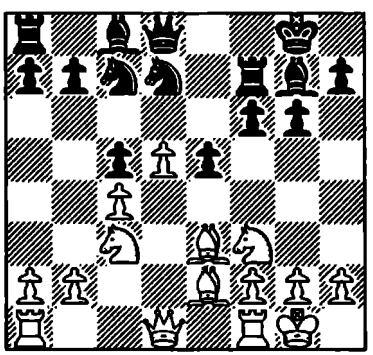
11...c5!? 12 d5

In the next game we will see 12 dxc5.

12...e5!?

Obtaining a kingside pawn majority but giving White a passed d-pawn. Black will try to blockade the passed pawn by bringing his knight to d6, and meanwhile White can play to open files on the queenside. In short, it will be a full-blooded and double-edged game.

13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗e3 ♖f7!



A very deep move. Miles envisages that he must hold on to c5, so he prepares to bring his bishop to f8. The immediate 14...♘e8 is met by 15 ♘e4 b6 16 a3, followed by b2-b4.

15 a3 ♗f8 16 ♖b1

White could also consider the immediate 16 b4!?, after which 16...cxb4 17 axb4 ♗xb4 18 ♘e4 gives him some initiative for the pawn.

16...♘e8 17 b4 b6 18 ♘d2

Another possibility was 18 ♘e4 but then 18...♘d6 (and not 18...f5 19 ♘eg5) 19 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 looks fine for Black.

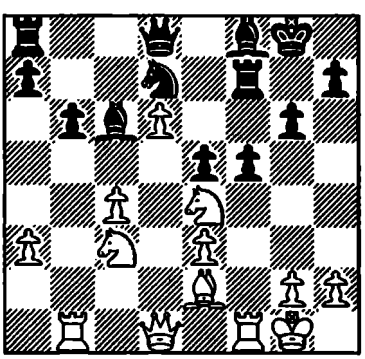
18...♘d6 19 ♘de4 ♘f5

Heading for the d4-square. White decides that it's now or never.

20 d6 ♗b7

Miles in turn has to switch plans and a short tactical skirmish ensues. Following 20...♘d4 White would immediately try to undermine the position of the knight with 21 f4, after which 21...f5 (21...♗b7 22 fxe5) is still met by 22 ♘g5 etc.

21 bxc5 ♘xe3 22 fxe3 f5 23 c6! ♗xc6



24 c5!

With White threatening to bring his bishop to c4, the struggle reaches its climax.

24...♖g7 25 ♗b5 ♕c8

Black cannot accept the offer of a piece as after 25...♗xe4 26 ♘xe4 fxe4 there follows 27 ♕d5+ ♔h8 28 c6 ♘f6

(or 28...♘c5 29 c7) 29 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 30 d7 ♕d6 31 ♖d1 etc.

After 25...♕c8 the complications finally fizzle out into a draw.

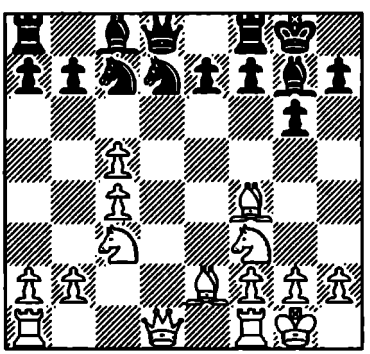
26 ♕b3+ ♔h8 27 ♘g5 ♘xc5 28 ♘f7+ ♔g8 29 ♘h6+ ♔h8 30 ♘f7+ ♔g8 31 ♘h6+ ½-½

Game 22
W.Watson-Baburin
Kilkenny 1994

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 c6

After a brief detour, we soon return to the paths of the previous game.

5 ♗e2 dxe5 6 ♘xe5 ♘d7 7 ♘f3 g6 8 0-0 ♗g7 9 c4 ♘c7 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♗f4 c5 12 dxc5



A totally different treatment to the 12 d5 we saw in the last game. White opens up the centre and hopes to use his advantage in development to trouble Black.

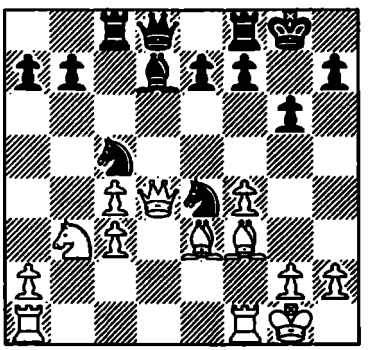
12...♘e6 13 ♗e3 ♗xc3!

It looks risky to give up this bishop, but Black wants to secure c5 for his knight. After 13...♘exc5 14 ♕c2 White threatens b2-b4, and preventing this with 14...a5 is met by 15 ♖ad1, threatening 16 ♗xc5.

14 bxc3 ♘dxc5 15 ♘d4 ♗d7 16 f4 ♘e4

Baburin pointed out that 16...f5 was possible both here and on his next move.

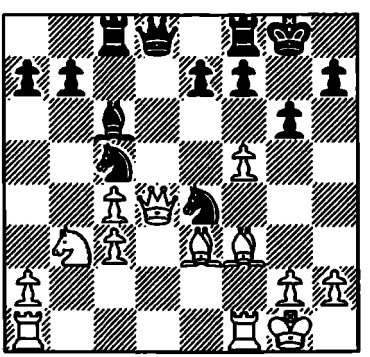
17 ♗f3 ♘6c5 18 ♘b3 ♖c8 19 ♕d4!



Suddenly making it very difficult for Black to maintain the position of his knights. He only manages to do so with some clever tactical play.

19...♗c6! 20 f5!?

Every move increases the tension. After 20 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 21 ♕xd8 (or 21 ♕xc5 ♗xf3) 21...♖fxd8 22 ♗xc5 ♗xf3 23 ♗xe7 ♖d7 the game fizzles out into a draw, whilst after 20 ♖ad1 Black defends himself with 20...♕b6.

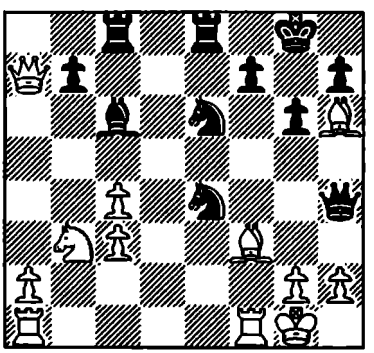


20...♖e8

Black gets out of the way of the threatened 21 ♗h6. According to Baburin, 20...f6? would have been bad because of 21 fxg6 hxg6 22 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 23 ♕xd8! (23 ♕g4 ♔g7! 24 ♗xc5 ♗xf3 allows Black to defend) 23...♖fxd8 24 ♗xc5 ♗xf3 25 ♗xe7 ♖d7 26 ♖xf3 ♖xe7 27 ♖xf6 with a winning endgame. But there was another possibility in 20...♕b6!?.

21 ♗h6?! e5 22 fxe6 ♘xe6 23 ♕xa7 ♕h4!

Suddenly finding a way to exploit the looseness of White's pieces. In time-trouble Watson does not find the best defence.



24 ♕e3?

24 ♗e3 was mandatory. Now Black is winning and doesn't give White any further chances.

24...♘6g5! 25 ♗xg5 ♘xg5 26 ♕d4 ♘xf3+ 27 gxf3 ♕g5+ 28 ♕g4 ♕e3+ 29 ♔g2 ♕xc3

Black re-established material parity but now has an overwhelming positional advantage.

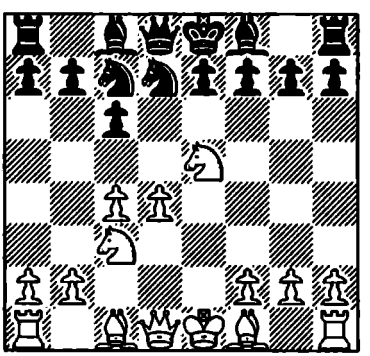
30 ♖f2 ♖cd8 31 ♖c1 ♕e3 32 ♖cf1 ♖e5 33 h4 h5 34 ♕g3 ♖f5 35 ♔g1? ♖xf3 0-1

Game 23
Short-Miles
European Ch., Ohrid 2001

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 c6 6 c4 ♘c7

In Adams-Burkart, European Club Cup, London 1996, even Michael Adams failed to get much against the naive-looking 6...♘b4. The game went 7 ♗e3 (7 a3? ♕xd4) 7...♗f5 8 ♘a3 ♘d7 9 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 10 ♗e2 g6 (10...e6 also looks very reasonable) 11 d5 ♗g7 12 ♗d4 ♘c2+ 13 ♘xc2 ♗xc2 14 ♕d2 ♗xd4 15 ♕xd4 0-0 16 0-0 cxd5 17 cxd5 and now the immediate 17...♕d6 would have left things fairly even.

7 ♘c3 ♘d7

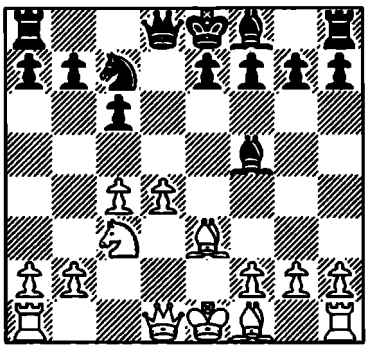


8 ♘xd7

It's not clear that this is White's best. In Apicella-Miles, Linares Zonal 1995, White preserved his knight from exchange with 8 ♘f3 g6 9 ♗e2 ♗g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗e3 a6 (11...♘f6 12 h3 ♘ce8 13 ♕b3 ♘d6 14 ♖ad1 was uncomfortable for Black in Nunn-Ghinda, Hamburg 1984 whilst 11...e5 leaves White better after 12 d5 cxd5 13 cxd5 ♘b6 14 ♗c5 ♖e8 15 d6 ♘e6 16 ♗a3,

according to Nunn) 12 a4 and now Black should probably play 12...a5 followed by bringing his c7-knight to b4 via a6.

8...♗xd7 9 ♗e3 ♗f5



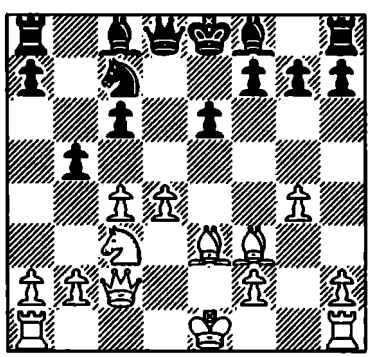
10 g4?!

Short loves to throw his pawns forwards like this, though very few other grandmasters would have played this way. On this occasion Miles makes it look rather dubious.

10...♗c8 11 ♗e2 e6 12 ♕c2 b5!

Well played! With White having created weaknesses, Miles reasons that this thematic pawn sacrifice will be stronger than usual.

13 ♗f3



Perhaps Short had been relying on this move, but Black reacts with a powerful exchange sacrifice. 13 cxb5 cxb5 14 ♘xb5 can be met by 14...♘d5 (or 14...♗b4+) when White's king would have difficulty finding a safe haven anywhere.

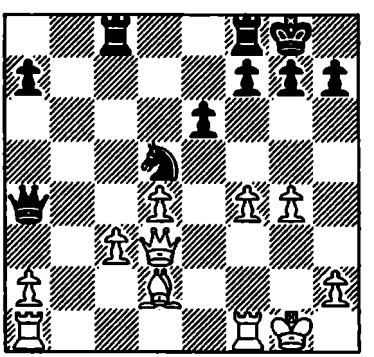
13...bxc4 14 ♗xc6+ ♗d7 15 ♕a4

Snatching the material with 15 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 would have given Black excellent compensation for the exchange, but now he is simply better at zero cost. Had Short missed Black's next move?

15...♖c8! 16 ♕xc4 ♘d5! 17 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 18 ♕d3 ♗b4 19 ♗d2 0-0 20 0-0 ♗xc3 21 bxc3 ♕a4

In this position Black has more than enough for his pawn; he can firmly blockade White's c- and d-pawns on d5 and c4, and in addition White's kingside has a gaping hole in it.

22 f4



22...f5!?

I don't especially like this move which creates some weaknesses in Black's own camp. My own preference would be for 22...♖c6 intending ...♖fc8. Black has very strong pressure on c3 and a2, and should White try to open the f-file with f4-f5, he would activate the black rook along the third rank.

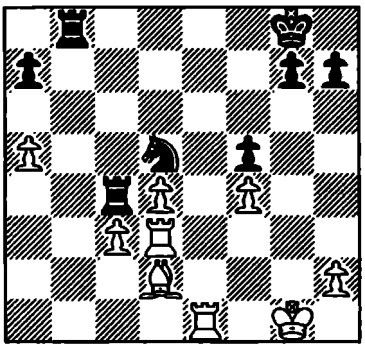
The other move that deserved consideration was the immediate 22...♕c4, for example 23 ♕xc4 (23 ♖f3 is better) 23...♖xc4 24 ♖f3 ♖fc8 25 ♖c1 ♖a4 26 ♖c2 ♖xd4 and Black certainly stands better.

23 gxf5 exf5 24 ♖f3 ♕c4 25 a4 ♕xd3 26 ♖xd3 ♖c4 27 a5

There has been a turn around and suddenly the position looks dangerous for Black. Should White mop up the a-pawn, the pawn on a5 would be very menacing. Meanwhile, Black's pieces are tied down to the blockade of the passed pawns on d4 and c3.

27...♖b8 28 ♖e1

Threatening to land on e5. The remainder of the game looks as if it was most likely affected by a bout of time trouble.



28...♘f6 29 d5 ♘e4 30 ♗e3 ♖b7 31 a6 ♖d7 32 ♖b1 ♘d6 33 ♖b4 ♖c8 34 ♗d4 ♔f7 35 ♖d1 ♔e8 36 ♖e1+ ♔d8 37 ♖e6 ♘e8 38 c4 ♘d6 39 ♗xa7 ♘xc4 40 ♖xc4 ♖xa7 41 ♖xc8+ ♔xc8 42 ♔f2 ♔d7 43 ♔e3 ♖a8 44 ♔d4 ♖b8 45 ♔c5 ♖b2 46 a7 ♖a2 47 ♔b6 1-0

Summary

Inviting a sacrifice on f7 (with 5...♘d7) is certainly not for those of a nervous disposition. White gets a very dangerous attack, but then again there is nothing clear. This makes it into a very interesting weapon for Black, especially against stronger players.

For anyone playing White against 5...♘d7, I would actually recommend that you withdraw the knight to f3. There's no point getting embroiled in complications that your opponent has probably studied. Keep the space and play quickly.

Tony Miles's 5...c6 is a very tough and interesting line for Black, which has so far been little explored by theory. On the next move Black can challenge White's knight on e5 without fearing a sacrifice on f7. Depending on how White plays it, Black has the option of a kingside fianchetto.

The lines in this chapter constitute an excellent way for Black to play against the Classical. For extra variety practical players might want to switch between 4...c6 (Chapter Four) and Miles's 4...dxe5 5 ♘xe5 c6. In these days of huge computer databases it is useful to keep your opponent on his toes.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♘xe5 c6 *(D)*

5...♘d7 6 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 7 ♕h5+ ♔e6 8 c4 ♘5f6 9 d5+ ♔d6 10 ♕f7 ♘e5 11 ♗f4 c5 12 ♘c3 a6 *(D)*

13 b4 – *Game 17*

13 0-0-0 – *Game 16*

6 ♗e2

6 ♘d2 – *Game 19*

6 c4 – *Game 23*

6 ♗c4 – *Game 18*

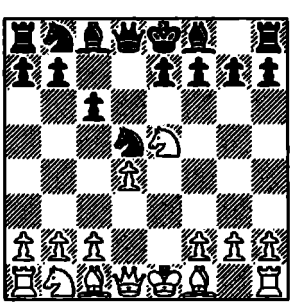
6...♘d7 7 ♘f3

7 ♘xd7 – *Game 20*

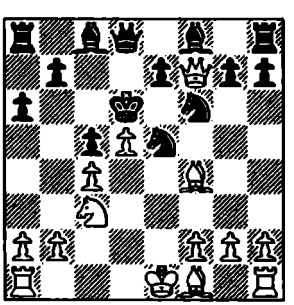
7...g6 8 0-0 ♗g7 9 c4 ♘c7 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♗f4 c5 *(D)* **12 d5**

12 dxc5 – *Game 22*

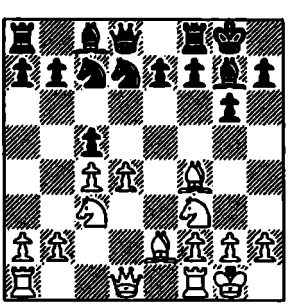
12...e5 13 ♗g5 f6 – *Game 21*



5...c6

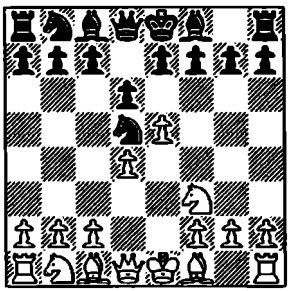


12...a6



11...c5

CHAPTER FOUR



Classical Divergences: 4...c6, 4...♘c6 and 4...g6

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3

In this Chapter we will consider some of Black's more uncommon ideas against the Classical.

Some readers may object to the fact that the Alburt Variation (with 4...g6) is represented only by Games 24 to 26, though this really reflects the declining popularity of 4...g6, at least in conjunction with 5 ♗c4 ♘b6. Although the bishop on g7 puts pressure on e5, it does seem that White can maintain this pawn and its cramping effect on Black's game. In the line 5 ♗c4 ♘b6 6 ♗b3 ♗g7 7 a4, the exciting 7...dxe5 looks rather dubious for Black because of the improvements pointed out within Game 24. The alternative (7...a5) looks rather passive and even Howell's ingenious plan in Game 26 looks better for White. In any case, whether or not Black manages to improve on these two games, he still has quite a passive game after 7 ♕e2. Maybe Black can keep things more or less equal if he defends very accurately, but for me the Alekhine should be all about counterplay.

Games 27 and 28 feature the ambitious but risky 4...♘c6. This certainly does the job of challenging White's centre but the drawback is that it allows a dangerous pawn sacrifice with 5 c4 ♘b6 6 e6!?. The correspondence player Marcinkiewicz has discovered many improvements for Black against the standard lines, but my concern is that the little-known 7 ♗d3 is far more dangerous than is generally thought. Alekhine himself thought highly of this and the existing theory relies heavily on White not making the most of his chances.

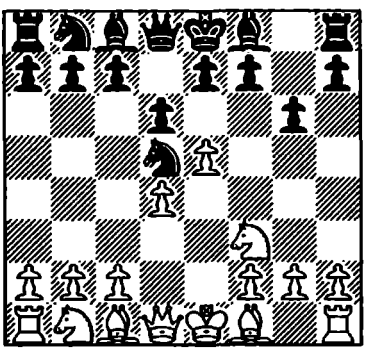
In Game 29 we look at 4...c6, which supports the knight on d5 (in anticipation of 5 ♗c4) and vacates the c7-square in case of White playing c2-c4. The knight is probably better placed there than on b6, especially if White later exchanges pawns in the centre with exd6. The point is that it can often come to e6, from where it pressurises the vulnerable d4-pawn.

The drawback to 4...c6 is that it is relatively passive and does not immediately increase the pressure on e5. It fol-

lows that the logical thing for White to do would be to maintain this pawn and it does in fact seem that White is better after 5 ♗e2 dxe5 6 dxe5.

Game 24
Oral-De Firmian
Reykjavik 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 g6



Putting the bishop on g7 is very logical as it helps to support undermining operations against White's d4 and e5 pawn chain. The American grandmaster Lev Alburt did most of the spadework on this line so it rightly carries his name.

5 ♗c4

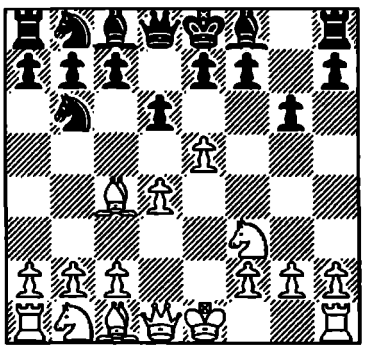
5 ♘g5 is not much more than a cheap trap which is well met by 5...c6 (but not 5...h6 6 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 7 ♕f3+) and now:

a) 6 c4 ♘c7 7 ♕f3 f6 8 exf6 exf6 9 ♕e3+ ♗e7 10 ♘f3 0-0 was very comfortable for Black in Ljubojevic-Tal, World Cup, Brussels 1988.

b) 6 f4 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 0-0 8 0-0 ♘a6 9 ♗b3 ♘ac7 10 c4 ♘b6 11 ♘c3 dxe5 12 fxe5 was Kosikov-Khmelnitsky, Kiev 1989, and now just 12...f6! would have been quite good for Black.

Black should also take account of the fact that White can transpose into an Exchange Variation with 5 c4 ♘b6 6 exd6 cxd6, though in this case his knight is already committed to f3 which precludes some of the more dangerous set-ups.

5...♘b6

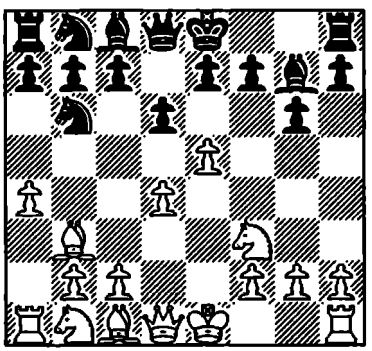


5...c6 leads to positions very similar to the important Kengis Variation and it can transpose directly if Black plays ...dxe5 at a later stage and White recaptures with the knight. The independent lines occur when White captures on d6 after 6 0-0 ♗g7 7 exd6 ♕xd6, for example 8 ♘bd2 ♗g4 9 ♖e1 0-0 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♘xf3 e6 (11...♘d7) 12 ♗f1 (White has also tried 12 ♗g5 but the quiet text move seems to make more sense) 12...b5 (in order to sidestep any possible preparation, Vaganian varied with 12...c5 against Tischbierek in the 1994/95 Bundesliga season and achieved a satisfactory position after 13 c4 ♘e7 14 dxc5 ♕xc5 15 ♖b1 ♕c7 16 b4 ♘bc6 17 ♕c2 ♘f5 18 c5 ♖fd8 etc.) 13 a4 b4 14 c4 bxc3 15 bxc3 ♕c7 16 ♗a3 ♖d8 17 c4 ♘e7 18 ♖a2 a5 19 ♖d2 ♘a6 20 g3 ♘b4 21 ♗g2 ♖ab8 22 ♕e2

♘f5 23 ♖ed1 c5 and Black had obtained a fully equal game in Ivanchuk-Vaganian, Manila Olympiad 1992.

6 ♗b3 ♗g7 7 a4

Other 7th move alternatives for White will be examined within the notes to Game 25 (Leko-Timman).



7...dxe5!?

A razor-sharp move which leads to wild complications. For the relatively sedate 7...a5 see Games 25-26.

8 a5

After 8 ♘xe5 ♗xe5! 9 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 10 ♔xd1, I think that 10...♗g4+ (10...♘c6 11 a5 ♘d7 12 e6 fxe6 13 ♗xe6 ♘de5 is what Black has played so far, and it also gives very decent play) 11 f3 ♗e6 12 ♗xe6 fxe6 is a good idea, when Black has a nice outpost for his knight on d5 or a hole on b4, should White play a later c2-c4. The doubled e-pawns should not be a problem in this position.

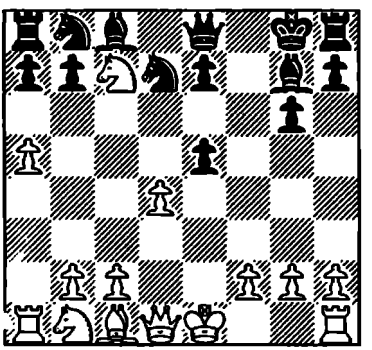
8...♘6d7

Allowing the following sacrifice, which Alburt has worked hard to show is just about okay for Black. After 8...♘d5 9 ♘xe5 we get a position similar to the Kengis Variation (4...dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 ♗c4) but with White having a better version of this because of his cramping pawn on a5.

9 ♗xf7+!

The only serious attempt to gain the advantage. 9 ♕e2 0-0 10 dxe5 ♘c5 is very comfortable for Black whilst both 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11 ♘g5 ♔e8 12 f4 h6 and 9 ♘g5 e6 10 ♗xe6 0-0! 11 0-0 exd4 leave White a pawn down with no compensation.

9...♔xf7 10 ♘g5+ ♔g8 11 ♘e6 ♕e8 12 ♘xc7



12...♕d8!

Lev Alburt's move, which stops White's knight getting back from a8. 12...♕f7 13 ♘xa8 exd4 14 0-0 ♘a6 15 c3 allows White to conduct a successful rescue.

13 ♘xa8

From a practical point of view this line has a serious drawback for Black in that White can draw by repetition with 13 ♘e6 ♕e8 14 ♘c7 etc.

13...exd4 14 c3

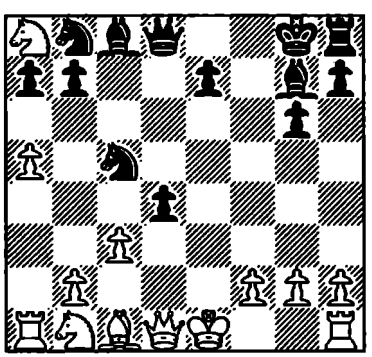
This has been White's knee-jerk reaction, trying to get play before Black wins his knight. But it is starting to look as if White can play less nervously with 14 0-0! ♘c6 15 c3 ♘c5 16 b4 and now:

a) After 16...♘e6?! Volzhin gives 17

♕b3 dxc3 18 ♘xc3 ♘cd4 19 ♕c4 ♗d7 20 ♗e3 ♘f5 (20...♕xa8 21 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 22 ♖ad1! won quickly in Gubanov-Romanovich, Chigorin Memorial 1995) 21 ♖ad1 ♘d6 22 ♕b3 ♗xc3 (22...♕xa8 23 ♘b5! ♗xb5 24 ♖xd6 exd6 25 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 26 ♕xd6+ ♔f7 27 ♕d5+) 23 ♗c5! ♕xa8 24 ♗xd6 exd6 25 ♖xd6 ♕e8 26 ♖fd1! ♗a4 27 ♖xe6 ♗xb3 28 ♖xe8+ ♔f7 29 ♖xh8 ♗xd1 30 ♖b8 with White having winning chances in the endgame.

b) 16...dxc3 17 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 and now Volzhin gives 18 ♖a3! ♘e4 19 ♖e1 c2 20 ♘d2 ♘xd2 21 ♗xd2 ♗f6 22 ♘c7 when Black has insufficient compensation for the exchange. In Z.Almasi-de la Villa Garcia, Pamplona 1999 White played less well with 18 bxc5?! which gave Black good compensation for the exchange after 18...c2 19 ♘c3 ♗xc3 20 ♖a3 (20 ♖a2!?) 20...♗f6 21 ♘c7 ♘c6 22 ♘d5 ♔f7 etc.

14...♘c5



15 cxd4

The tempting 15 b4?! doesn't work after 15...♘e4 16 ♕b3+ e6 17 cxd4 ♘c6! intending 18...♗d7, as pointed out by Dlugy.

15...♗xd4 16 ♗e3

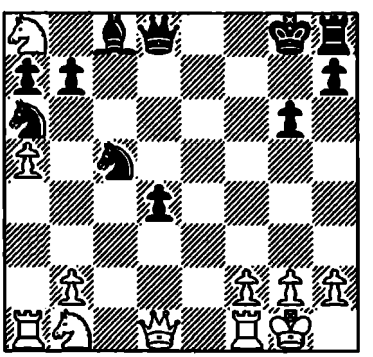
An attempt to improve on Christiansen-Alburt, US Ch., Jacksonville 1990 in which White ended up in serious trouble after 16 0-0 e5 (Black can also consider both 16...♘c6 and 16...♘ba6) 17 ♗e3 (Christiansen later suggested 17 ♘c3 ♗f5 18 ♘b5 ♗d3 19 ♘xd4 exd4 20 ♗f4 and claimed an advantage for White) 17...♘ba6 (17...♘c6 18 ♗xd4 exd4 19 ♕c2 ♘e6 20 a6 ♕d5 21 ♘d2 ♔g7, as in Cooper-G Smith, Walsall 1992, is also interesting) 18 ♘c3 ♗f5! and now:

a) The game continued 19 ♖c1 ♔g7! 20 ♗xd4 ♕xd4! 21 b4?! (White should play 21 ♕xd4 exd4 22 ♘b5 after which 22...♖xa8 23 ♘xd4 ♔f6 leaves Black only slightly better) 21...♘d3 22 ♘e2 ♕d7 23 ♖c3 ♖xa8 24 g4 ♘b2! 25 ♕c1 ♗d3 26 ♕xb2 ♕xg4+ 27 ♘g3 ♗xf1 28 ♔xf1 ♕d4 with a winning position.

b) According to Christiansen, 19 ♘b5! ♗d3 20 ♗xd4 exd4 21 b4 ♗xf1 (21...♘xb4 22 ♖c1!) 22 bxc5 ♗xb5 23 ♕b3+ ♔g7 24 ♕xb5 ♕xa8 25 ♕d7+ leads to a draw by perpetual check.

These positions are clearly very complicated and the reader would be well advised to take existing 'theory' with a pinch of salt.

16...e5 17 ♗xd4 exd4 18 0-0 ♘ba6



Cutting off the a8 knight's exit squares. But can this knight actually be captured when White's other pieces start coming into play?

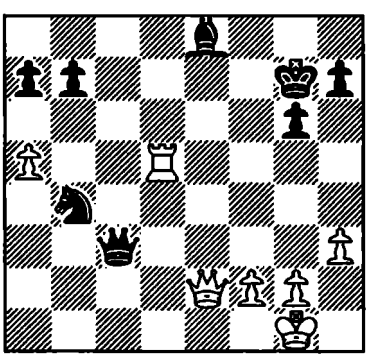
19 ♘d2 ♗e6 20 ♖e1 ♗f7 21 ♘e4 d3 22 b4 ♘xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♔g7 24 ♖a3 d2 25 ♖e2 ♖e8 26 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 27 ♖a2 ♕xa8 28 ♖xd2

The knight has been lost but White has a rook and pawn for the two minor pieces. Add in the factor that Black's king is exposed and White's prospects are slightly preferable.

28...♕c8 29 ♖d8 ♕e6 30 h3

Perhaps 30 ♕d4+ was more precise. After 30...♔g8 31 h3 Black can't take the b4-pawn with 31...♕e1+ 32 ♔h2 ♘xb4 because of 33 ♕c4+ ♔g7 34 ♖d4! ♘c6 35 ♖e4! ♕xf2 36 ♖xe8 etc. Now Black's queen comes to a key central square.

30...♕e5! 31 ♖d5 ♕c3 32 ♕e2 ♘xb4



33 ♕xe8?

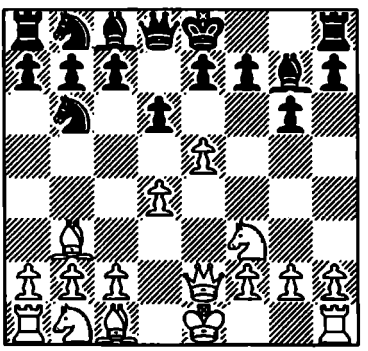
Blundering the game away. 33 ♕e7+ ♗f7 (33...♔h6?? 34 ♕f8+ ♕g7 35 ♕f4+ g5 36 ♕xb4) 34 ♖d8! leaves Black with nothing better than a draw by perpetual check after 34...♕c1+ 35 ♔h2 ♕f4+ etc.

33...♕c1+! 0-1

White loses a piece after 34 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 35 ♔g1 ♘xd5 36 ♕d7+ ♕f7 etc.

Game 25
Leko-Timman
Wijk aan Zee 1996

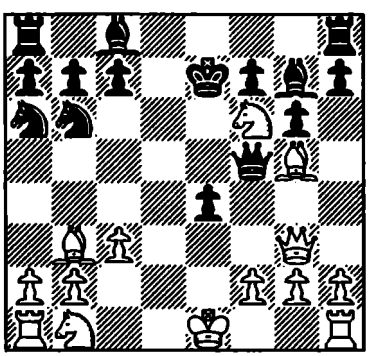
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 g6 5 ♗c4 ♘b6 6 ♗b3 ♗g7 7 ♕e2



A logical move which avoids the complications of 7 a4 dxe5 (see Game 24), whilst aiming to maintain his advantage in space. Alburt has also had a long-running battle against 7 ♘g5 e6 (7...d5?! gives Black a cramped position because he can no longer challenge the e5-pawn) and now:

a) In the game Pupols-Alburt, Portland 1987, Alburt defused 8 f4 with 8...dxe5 9 fxe5 c5 10 0-0 0-0 11 c3 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♘c6 13 ♘f3 f6 14 ♘c3!? (White's best try as 14 exf6 ♕xf6 15 ♗e3 ♘d5 16 ♗f2 ♘f4 produces a complex position in which both sides have chances) 14...fxe5 15 ♗g5 ♕d7 16 dxe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘xe5 ♖xf1+! 18 ♕xf1 ♕d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xe5 20 ♗e7 ♗d7 (Alburt mentioned that 20...♕c7 is an alternative) 21 ♖e1 ♕f5 22 ♕e2 ♖e8 with a virtually even game.

b) 8 ♕f3 ♕e7 (8...♕d7 is less good because of 9 ♘e4 dxe5 10 dxe5 ♗xe5 11 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 12 ♕xf6 ♖g8 13 ♕h4 f5 14 ♘c3, when White has excellent compensation for his pawn; 8...0-0 is also uncomfortable for Black after 9 ♕h3 h6 10 ♘f3 or even 10 ♘e4) 9 ♘e4 dxe5 10 ♗g5 ♕b4+ 11 c3 ♕a5 12 ♘f6+ (12 ♗f6 ♗xf6 13 ♕xf6 0-0 14 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 15 dxe5 ♗d7 gives Black equality in the endgame according to Alburt) 12...♔f8 13 d5 e4 14 ♕g3 ♘a6! (14...♘8d7 15 ♘xd7+ ♘xd7 16 dxe6 ♘c5 17 e7+ ♔e8 18 0-0! was very dangerous for Black in Short-Alburt, Foxboro {1st matchgame} 1985) 15 dxe6 ♕f5 (15...h6!? 16 e7+ ♔xe7 17 ♘d5+ ♔e8 18 ♘xc7+ ♘xc7 19 ♕xc7 ♕xg5 20 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 21 ♕xg7 ♖e8 is also very interesting and left Black with compensation for the pawn in van der Wiel-Blees, Dutch Ch., Hilversum 1990) 16 e7+ ♔xe7



17 ♘d5+ (17 ♘g8+ ♔e8 18 ♘h6 ♗xh6 19 ♗xh6 ♗e6 20 0-0 f6 leaves White with some compensation for his pawn but 17 ♘h5+? is bad because of 17...f6 18 ♘xg7 ♕xg5) 17...♔f8 18 ♘e3 ♕d7 and Black will consolidate with 19...f6 according to Nigel Short. An alternative approach for White is the simple 7 exd6 but then 7...cxd6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖e1 ♘c6 10 h3 ♘a5 gets the bishop pair as compensation for Black's lack of space.

7...0-0

The fact that the moves a2-a4 and ...a7-a5 have not been played gives Black an additional possibility in 7...♘c6 8 0-0 dxe5 9 dxe5 ♘d4 10 ♘xd4 ♕xd4. Black's knight on b6 is better protected, White no longer has support for a piece on b5 and the queenside is now quite habitable for Black's king. Play can continue 11 e6 (after 11 ♖e1 ♗g4 12 ♕f1 I think that 12...♗e6 13 ♗xe6 fxe6 looks fine for Black because of his active pieces) 11...♗xe6 12 ♗xe6 fxe6 13 ♕xe6 ♕c4 14 ♕xc4 (14 ♕h3 0-0 was also very comfortable for Black in Vorobiov-Chekhov, Moscow 1999) 14...♘xc4 15 c3 (if both sides had moved their a-pawns White could defend b2 with ♖a2 at this point) 15...0-0-0 and Black's active pieces fully compensated for his marginally inferior pawn structure, Dolmatov-Neckar, Bern 1994.

8 h3 a5

After White's reply this transposes back into the 7 a4 line. Black can also play 8...♘c6, after which 9 0-0 ♘a5 10 ♘c3 actually transposes into a line of the Pirc Defence. Kveinys-Speelman, Moscow Olympiad 1994 continued 10...h6!? 11 ♘e4 ♘xb3 12 axb3 f6!? 13 c4 fxe5 14 dxe5 ♘d7 with complex play in prospect.

9 a4 ♘c6 10 0-0 dxe5 11 dxe5 ♘d4 12 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 13 ♖e1

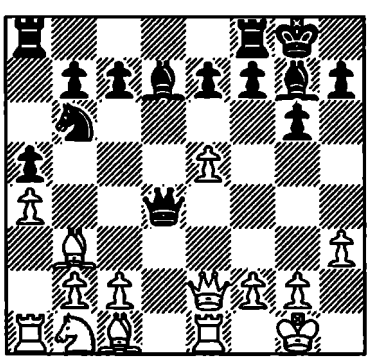
Arriving at a critical position in which White temporarily has a slight advan-

tage because his pawn on e5 shuts the g7 bishop out of play. Having said that, there is nothing terribly wrong with Black's position and if he successfully completes his development he will probably be about equal.

13...♗d7

13...e6 was Timman's first idea and it may in fact be playable if Black meets 14 ♘d2 with 14...♗d7 intending to transfer the bishop to c6 (in the game Short-Timman, Tilburg 1991, Black played 14...♘d5 but after 15 ♘f3 ♕c5 16 ♕e4 ♕b4 17 ♗c4! ♘b6 18 b3! ♘xc4 19 bxc4 ♖e8 20 ♖d1 found himself completely tied up, White's pawn weaknesses being insignificant in this position).

Black would really like to exchange the light-squared bishops but 13...♗e6 14 ♗xe6 fxe6 15 ♘d2, followed by ♘f3, will support the key pawn on e5 and leave Black with a miserable game. He can, however, play 13...♗f5 14 ♘d2 ♕d7, after which 15 ♘f3 ♗e6 16 ♖d1 ♕c8 17 ♕b5 ♗xb3 18 ♕xb3 is only slightly better for White.



14 ♘c3!

Leko finds the most challenging line, planning to plant the knight on b5. Black can equalise after 14 c3 with 14...♕h4 15 ♘d2 ♗c6 16 ♘e4 (or 16 ♘f3 ♕h5 17 ♘d4 ♕xe2 18 ♖xe2 ♗d5) 16...♗xe5 17 ♗g5 ♕xe4 18 ♕xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♘d7 20 ♖d1 ♗d6 21 ♗xe7 ♘c5!, as in Stefansson-Egger, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

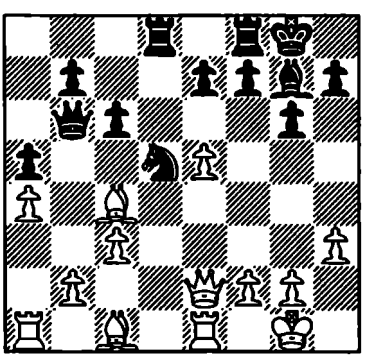
14...♗c6

At the time of the game this was a new move but it's not at all clear that anything's wrong with the old line. After 14...e6 15 ♗g5 h6, Chekhov gave 16 ♗e7 (White should play 16 ♖ad1, after which 16...♕xe5 17 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♖xe5 hxg5 is just equal) 16...♖fe8 17 ♖ad1 but then, as Burgess pointed out, 17...♕xe5 just wins a pawn for Black.

15 ♘b5!

As Leko pointed out in his notes, Black can meet 15 e6 with 15...f5 16 ♗g5 ♕b4, producing a position in which both sides have chances.

15...♗xb5 16 ♕xb5 c6 17 ♕e2 ♘d5 18 c3 ♕b6 19 ♗c4 ♖ad8



20 ♗g5?!

According to Leko this was an error. He later preferred an initial 20 h4! and only after 20...h5 to play 21 ♗g5. This position would be rather unpleasant for Black.

20...h6! 21 ♗c1

After 21 ♗h4 Black would play 21...♕c5, when the bishop on h4 is misplaced. But now Black gets some counterplay on the d-file.

21...e6 22 h4 ♖d7 23 g3

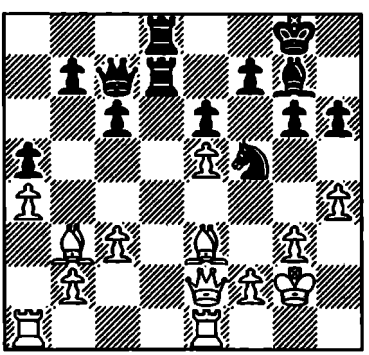
Playing for mate with 23 h5?! g5 24 ♕e4 (threatening 25 ♗d3) would give Black counterplay after 24...f5! 25 exf6 ♖xf6, threatening f2.

23...♖fd8 24 ♔g2 ♕c5 25 ♗b3 ♕b6 26 ♗c4 ♕c5 27 ♗b3 ♕b6 28 ♕c4 ♘e7

Unveiling his fire-power on the d-file. Black is out of the woods.

29 ♗e3 ♕c7 30 ♕e2 ♘f5

After 30...♕xe5 Leko intended to play 31 ♗b6!, after which 31...♕xe2 32 ♖xe2 ♖f8! (and not 32...♖a8 33 ♖xe6!) 33 ♗xa5 (33 ♖xe6? ♘c8!) 33...♘d5 34 ♗xd5 ♖xd5! 35 ♗b6 ♖a8 36 a5 ♗f6 brings about an equal endgame.



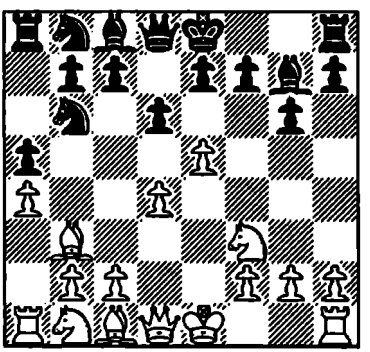
31 ♗f4 ♕b6 32 ♗c4 ♕c5 33 ♖ab1 ♗f8 34 ♗b3 ½-½

Game 26
Nunn-J.Howell
Port Erin 1994

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 g6 5 ♗c4 ♘b6 6 ♗b3 ♗g7

In Volzhin-Davies, Dhaka 2001, I tried 6...♘c6?! but obtained a very bad position from the opening after 7 exd6! cxd6 (Black also has a difficult position after 7...♕xd6 8 ♘c3 ♗g7 9 ♘e4 ♕d8 10 c3 because his only pawn lever, ...e7-e5, is very hard to achieve due to the danger of White playing ♗c1-g5 in reply) 8 d5 ♘a5 9 ♕d4 f6 10 ♗d2! ♘xb3 11 axb3 ♗g7 12 ♗a5! etc.

7 a4 a5



The solid move, preventing the further advance of White's a-pawn. 7...dxe5 was covered in Game 24 (Oral-De Firmian).

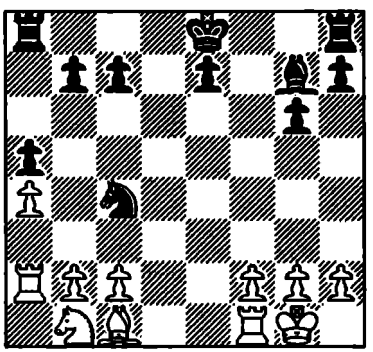
8 ♕e2

At this point in the proceedings, 8 exd6 is well worth considering as after 8...cxd6 (White is also better after either 8...♕xd6 9 ♘c3 or 8...exd6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1) 9 0-0 0-0 10 h3, White is certainly better off than in the 7 exd6 line because of the weakness of b5. Adorjan-Smejkal, Wijk aan Zee 1972 continued 10...♘c6 11 ♘c3 d5 12 ♗f4 ♗e6 13 ♘b5 with much the better game for White.

8...0-0

Black has also played 8...♘c6 9 0-0

dxe5 (9...♗g4 is met by 10 ♗xf7+ etc.) 10 dxe5 ♘d4 11 ♘xd4 ♕xd4, but with the moves a2-a4 and ...a7-a5 inserted the position is very difficult for Black. Van der Wiel-Santa Roman, Cannes (rapid) 1992 continued 12 e6 (12 ♖e1 is also very interesting as after 12...♗g4 I think that White can play 13 ♗e3! ♗xe2 14 ♗xd4 ♗c4 15 ♗xb6 ♗xb3 16 cxb3 cxb6 17 ♘d2 followed by ♘c4, when White simultaneously guards e5 and puts pressure on the b6-pawn) 12...♗xe6 13 ♗xe6 fxe6 14 ♕xe6 ♕c4 15 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 16 ♖a2!



(without a2-a4 and ...a7-a5 this would be impossible) 16...♖f8 17 b3 ♘d6 18 ♗a3 ♖f5 19 c4 ♗f6 20 ♖e2 and White started to develop quite serious pressure.

9 h3 dxe5 10 dxe5 ♘a6!?

For the standard 10...♘c6 see the previous game, Leko-Timman. The text is an interesting attempt to generate some counterplay which Howell had to face with on the white side before springing it on Nunn.

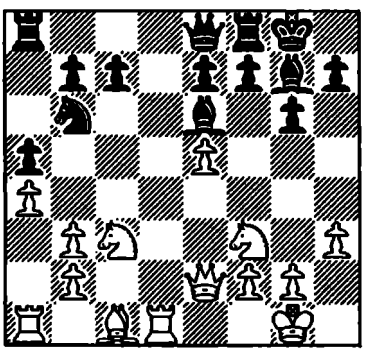
11 0-0

White can prevent the knight from coming to c5 with 11 ♗e3 but then 11...♘d5 leaves White with nothing better than 12 0-0 ♘xe3 13 ♕xe3. Nunn prefers to give up his light-squared bishop.

11...♘c5 12 ♖d1 ♕e8 13 ♘c3 ♘xb3

Nunn pointed out that trying to win the a-pawn with 13...♗d7 is far too optimistic; after 14 ♘d4 ♘bxa4 15 ♘xa4 ♘xa4 (or 15...♗xa4 16 ♗xa4 ♘xa4 17 ♘b5 etc.), White plays the powerful 16 e6!.

14 cxb3 ♗e6



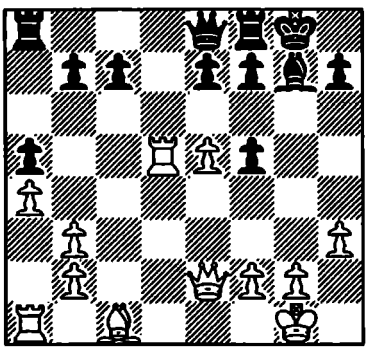
Black's main problem in this position is in finding some sort of active plan. He can also develop his pieces with 14...♗d7 15 ♘d4 ♖d8, but where does he intend to go from there?

15 ♘d4 ♗d5 16 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 17 ♘f5! gxf5

Black had an unpleasant choice between weakening his kingside like this and allowing the exchange of his dark-squared bishop. Personally speaking I would have preferred 17...c6; after 18 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♖d4 ♕d7 20 ♖h4 ♔g8 21 ♗h6 Black can play 21...♖fe8, intending ...♕e6 and ...f7-f6 (Nunn gave 21...♖fd8 22 ♖e1 when he felt that White's attacking chances – based on e5-e6 or f4-f5 – were more significant

than the strength of Black's knight on d5).

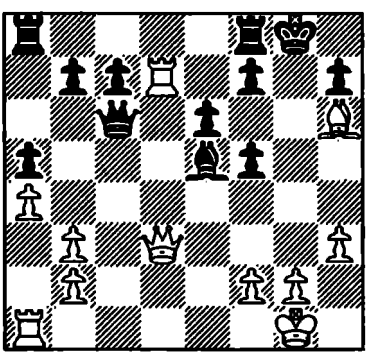
18 ♖xd5



18...♕c6 19 ♕d3

The only way to maintain control of the d-file, though this involves the sacrifice of the e-pawn. Black is okay after either 19 ♖b5 b6, intending ...♕e6, or 19 ♖d3 ♖ad8 20 ♖g3 ♕e6.

19...e6 20 ♖d7 ♗xe5 21 ♗h6



21...♗xb2?

According to Nunn this was the decisive mistake. Apparently Black can still defend himself with the paradoxical 21...♗d6! 22 f4 (or 22 ♕d4 f6 23 ♖g7+ ♔h8 24 ♕h4 ♕e4 25 ♕h5 f4! defends against the threat of ♖xh7+) 22...♔h8 23 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 24 ♕c3+ ♕xc3 25 bxc3 ♗xf4 with a piece and two pawns for the rook.

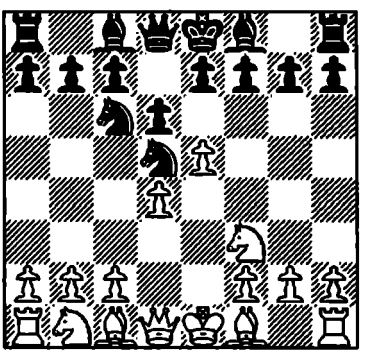
22 ♖b1 ♗g7?

22...♗e5 was more tenacious but Black is still in serious trouble after 23 ♖c1.

23 ♕g3 ♕c3 24 ♕xc3 ♗xc3 25 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 26 ♖xc7 ♗b4 27 ♖xb7 ♖d8 28 g3 ♔g7 29 ♖c1 1-0

Game 27
Wydrowski-Marcinkiewicz
Correspondence 1997

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘c6



A highly provocative move, which encourages White to go for broke. I do not recommended it to players with a nervous disposition!

5 c4

The critical line, and in fact probably the only way to get something. After the quiet 5 ♗e2 dxe5 6 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 7 dxe5 ♗f5 Black developed very comfortably in the game Kengis-Grigorian, Togliatti 1985.

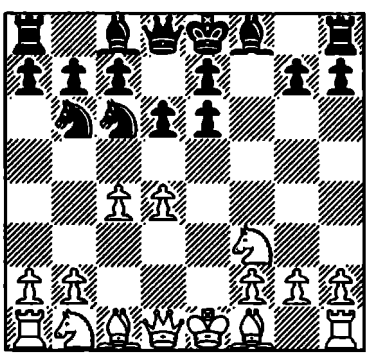
White has also played 5 ♗b5 but this fails to achieve anything after 5...a6 6 ♗a4 (after 6 ♗xc6+ bxc6 7 0-0 Black

achieved a solid position with 7...e6 8 ♘bd2 ♗e7 9 ♘c4 a5 10 ♖e1 a4 11 ♗d2 ♗d7 12 ♕c1 0-0 13 ♘g5 ♕b8! in the game Shamkovich-Larsen, Moscow 1962) 6...♘b6 7 ♗xc6+ bxc6 8 0-0 ♗g4 9 ♕e2 ♕d7 10 h3 ♗h5 11 ♘c3?! (11 b3 looks better) 11...e6 12 ♗g5 d5 and with ...c6-c5 coming Black had a good game in Lastin-Dyachkov, Russian Junior Ch., Ekaterinburg 1996.

5...♘b6 6 e6

The sharpest line, sacrificing a pawn for a strong attack. White can also try to exploit the early development of Black's queen's knight by transposing into an Exchange Variation with 6 exd6 exd6 (6...cxd6 7 d5 ♘e5 8 ♘d4! ♘exc4 9 a4! ♘e5 10 ♘c3 a5 11 ♗b5+ ♗d7 12 f4 ♗xb5 13 fxe5 ♗c4 14 e6! gave White a powerful attack in Adorjan-Polgar, Budapest 1973) but after 7 d5 (7 ♘c3 ♗e7 8 ♗e2 0-0 transposes into positions considered in Chapter 6) 7...♘e5 8 ♘d4 c5! 9 dxc6 ♘xc6 Black can equalise according to Pogorelov.

6...fxe6



7 ♘g5

The most direct line but not necessarily the best. White has several interesting alternatives:

a) 7 h4 e5 8 d5 ♘d4 9 ♘xd4 exd4 and now:

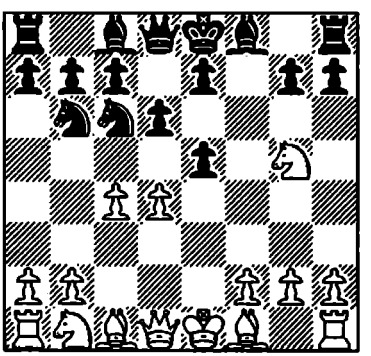
a1) 10 ♗d3 ♕d7 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗d2 ♕g4 13 ♗e2 ♕e4 14 0-0 ♗f5 15 ♘a3 was played in Tal-Larsen, Eersel (8th matchgame) 1969, and now Black should have played 15...g6 (after his actual choice of 15...♕xh4?! White could have obtained a strong attack with 16 ♘b5 d3 17 ♘xc7+ ♔d8 18 ♘xa8 dxe2 19 ♕xe2 ♘xa8 20 c5!).

a2) 10 ♕xd4 e5 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 12 ♗g5 ♕d7 13 ♗e2 was played in Honfi-Westerinen, Wijk aan Zee 1969 and now 13...♕f7 looks fine for Black.

b) 7 ♗e3!? ♘d7 (the alternatives look even less satisfactory: 7...g6?! 8 h4 will give White a very strong attack and 7...e5 8 d5 leaves Black without a good place to put his knight) 8 ♘c3 ♘f6 9 ♗d3 g6 10 h4 ♗g7 11 ♘g5 e5 12 d5 ♘d4 13 h5 gxh5 (13...♘xh5 14 ♖xh5; 13...♗g4 14 f3) 14 ♗xd4 exd4 was Vogt-Cibulka, Trencianske Teplice 1974 and now Plachetka's suggestion of 15 ♘ce4 (the game saw 15 ♘e2) 15...♗g4 16 ♕c2 looks very good for White.

c) 7 ♗d3!? will be considered in the next game, Reed-Danielsson.

7...e5



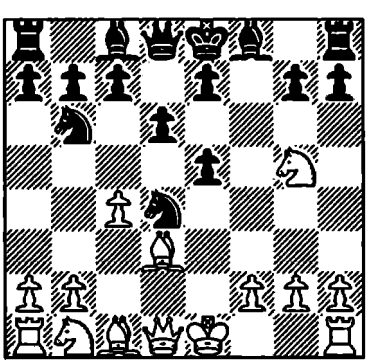
8 ♗d3

White has a major alternative in 8 d5 ♘d4 9 ♗d3 and now:

a) 9...g6 looks very dangerous for Black after 10 h4!? ♗f5 11 h5 ♗g7 12 hxg6 ♗xg6 (after 12...hxg6 there follows 13 ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 14 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 15 ♕d3 with an edge for White because of his control of e4) 13 ♘xh7! (13 ♘c3!? c6 14 ♗e3 e6 15 ♗xg6+ hxg6 16 ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 17 dxe6 ♕e7 18 ♕d3 also gave White a strong attack in I.Drozdov-Nosenko, Ukrainian Ch., Kharkov 1988) 13...♗xh7 (or 13...e4 14 ♕g4!) 14 ♗xh7 with a strong attack.

b) Black should probably play 9...♗f5! 10 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 11 ♘e6 (after 11 ♗e3 too, Black should get ready to eject a White knight from e6 by playing 11...g6, intending ...♘g7) 11...♕d7 12 ♗e3 (after 12 ♘c3 the right move is 12...g6 as usual) 12...g6 13 ♗xb6 axb6 14 ♘c3 ♘g7! 15 ♕g4 ♘xe6 16 dxe6 ♕c6 17 h4 ♗g7 18 ♘d5? b5! and Black seized the initiative in Sorsak-Stratil, Bratislava 1992.

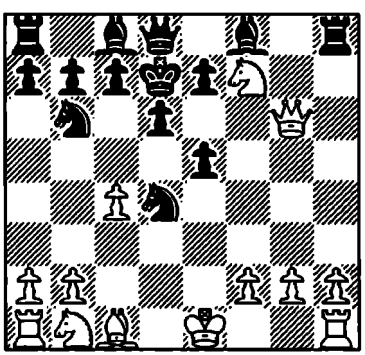
8...♘xd4



9 ♕h5+

The alternative is 9 ♗xh7 ♖xh7 10 ♘xh7 ♗f5 11 ♘a3 ♘xc4 (11...e6!? 12 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 13 0-0 c5 is another possibility suggested by Komarov; Black has compensation for the exchange) 12 ♘xc4 (if 12 0-0 there is 12...♘xa3 13 bxa3 ♗c2 14 ♕h5+ g6, or if 12 ♕a4+ there follows 12...b5 13 ♘xb5 ♗d7 etc.) 12...♘c2+ 13 ♔f1 ♘xa1 14 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 15 ♘e3 ♕d7 16 ♕f3? (the theoretical move is 16 ♗d2 after which Burgess gives 16...♘c2 17 ♘xc2 ♕a4 18 ♘e3 ♗d3+ 19 ♔g1 ♕xa2 without an assessment; I propose that it's 'unclear', Black having three pawns for the piece) 16...g6 17 g4 ♕c6 18 ♕xc6 ♗d3+ 19 ♔e1 bxc6 20 ♔d2 ♗b1 and Black was winning in Runowiecki-Marcinkiewicz, correspondence 1997.

9...g6 10 ♗xg6+ hxg6 11 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 12 ♘f7



12...♘xc4!!

This amazing queen sacrifice completely alters the assessment of this position. 12...♕e8 13 ♘xh8 is known to offer Black inadequate compensation.

13 ♘xd8

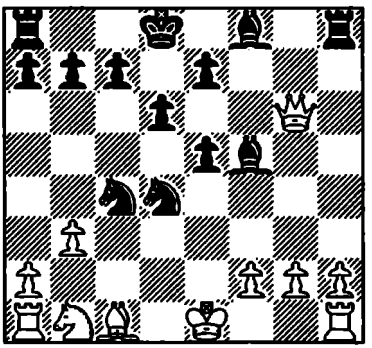
Black intended to answer 13 ♘xh8! with 13...c6!?, when it's anybody's guess as to what's happening.

13...♔xd8 14 b3

Both 14 ♘d2 and 14 ♘c3 allow

14...♗f5 but the position isn't clear in either case. White can also prevent this with 14 g4!?; all this requires more analysis.

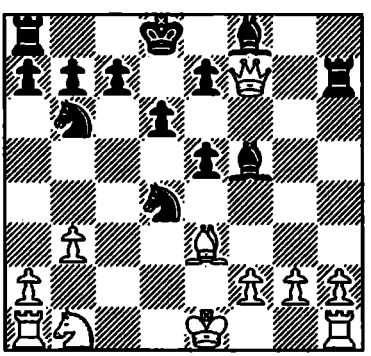
14...♗f5



15 ♕f7 ♘b6 16 ♗e3

This meets with an amazing refutation but there is very little White can do. After 16 ♗b2 there follows 16...♗e6 17 ♕g6 ♖h6 18 ♕g3 ♘c2+ etc.

16...♖h7!!



17 ♕g8

The point is that after 17 ♕xf8+ ♔d7 White's queen is trapped.

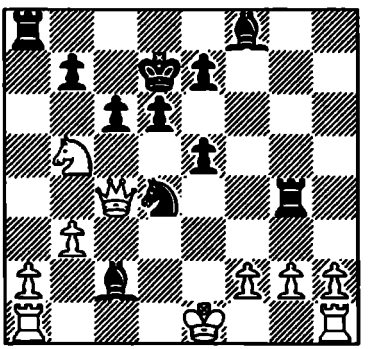
17...♘c2+ 18 ♔e2 ♔d7 19 ♗xb6 axb6 20 ♘c3 ♖g7 21 ♕c4 ♖g4 22 ♕f7

White also loses his queen mid-board after 22 ♕b5+ c6! 23 ♕xb6 ♖b4 etc.

22...♗g6 23 ♕d5 ♘d4+! 24 ♔d1 c6 25 ♕c4 b5! 26 ♘xb5

Retreating the queen doesn't help. After 26 ♕f1 there follows 26...♘xb3 27 ♔e2 ♘d4+ 28 ♔d1 ♘c2 29 ♔e2 ♖c4! etc.

26...♗c2+ 27 ♔e1

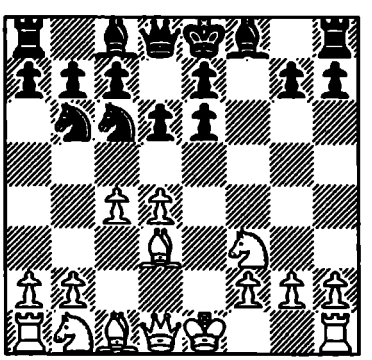


27...cxb5! 0-1

If 28 ♕c3 there follows 28...♗xb3! 29 ♕h3 ♗e6 30 ♕h7 ♗f5 31 ♕h5 ♖xg2.

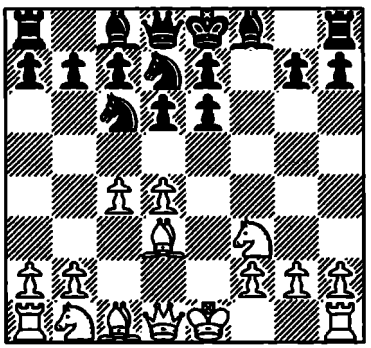
Game 28
E.Reed-G.Danielsson
Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 5 c4 ♘b6 6 e6 fxe6 7 ♗d3!?



Alekhine himself liked this natural move, which to me indicates that it deserves a closer look.

7...♘d7



Burgess, in *The Complete Alekhine*, suggests that 7...e5 is the answer but after 8 d5 ♘b4 White should keep his light-squared bishop with 9 ♗e4! (9 ♘g5 ♘xd3+ 10 ♕xd3 e6 11 ♘xh7 ♕e7 was unclear in Letelier-Penrose, Moscow 1956) and now:

a) White obtains a strong attack after both 9...e6 10 ♘g5 and 9...♗g4 10 a3 ♘a6 11 ♕c2.

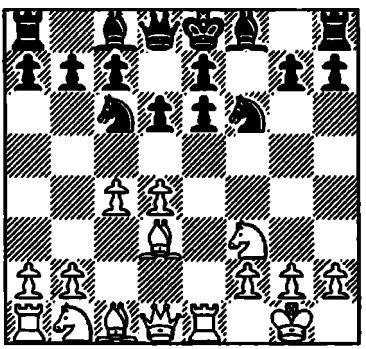
b) 9...g6 10 ♘g5 ♗g7 11 ♘xh7 is also good for White.

Black's best may be to challenge the bishop immediately with 7...♘b4, after which 8 ♗e2 (8 ♘g5 ♘xd3+ 9 ♕xd3 ♕d7 10 ♘xh7 ♕c6 11 ♕g6+ ♔d7 produced a messy position in Lehmann-Bogolyubov, Munich 1950) 8...g6 9 a3 ♘c6 10 b4 ♗g7 11 ♗b2 0-0 12 0-0 ♕e8 13 b5 ♘d8 gave White good compensation for the pawn in Vogt-Rogulj, Trencianske Teplice 1979.

8 0-0

Alekhine pointed out that White can win the exchange with 8 ♘g5 ♘f6 9 ♗xh7 ♘xh7 10 ♕h5+ ♔d7 11 ♘xh7 ♘xd4 12 ♘a3 ♕e8 (there's nothing better) 13 ♘f6+, but that after 13...exf6 14 ♕xh8 ♕g6 Black has good compensation.

8...♘f6 9 ♖e1



9...e5?

Returning the pawn without easing the defence. According to Alekhine Black should have played 9...g6, after which the great man suggested that White should sacrifice another pawn with 10 d5 exd5 11 cxd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘g5!. White would certainly have very strong pressure though this position would require further analysis.

10 dxe5 ♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 dxe5 12 ♖xe5 ♕d6 13 ♗f4 ♗g4 14 ♕d2 ♕d7

After 14...0-0-0? 15 ♖d5 White wins on the spot.

15 ♘c3

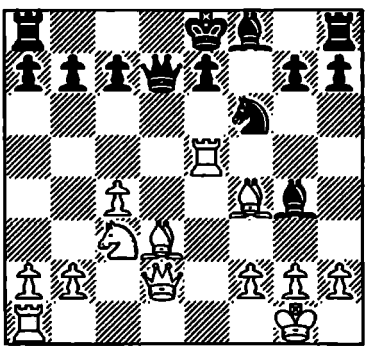
see following diagram

In his notes Alekhine suggested that 15 h3! was stronger as after 15...0-0-0 he obtains a winning attack with 16 ♕a5 ♕xd3 17 ♖c5 etc.

15...♖d8?

After this Black's king gets caught in the centre. Alekhine pointed out that

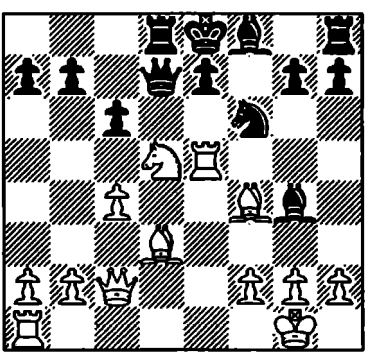
Black should play 15...0-0-0 and then gave a brilliant means of continuing the attack with 16 ♘b5! (Black is okay after either 16 ♘d5 e6 or 16 ♖e3 e5 17 ♗xe5 ♗b4) 16...♕xd3 (if 16...c6? then 17 ♘xa7+ wins, but 16...e6 is more tenacious) 17 ♕a5 ♔d7 (17...♕xc4 18 ♖c5) 18 ♖e3 ♕c2 19 ♕xc7+ ♔e8 20 ♖ae1 etc.



16 ♘d5 c6

After 16...e6 White wins with 17 ♘xc7+ ♕xc7 18 ♖xe6+ etc.

17 ♕c2!



Threatening 18 ♗g6+ followed by mate.

17...♔f7 18 h3 cxd5

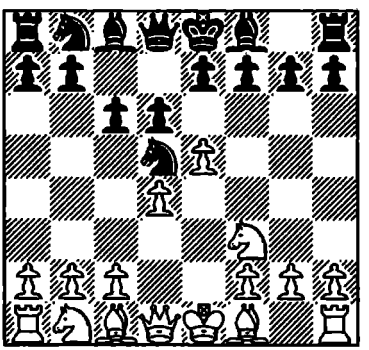
Or 18...♗e6 19 ♖xe6! ♕xe6 20 ♗f5 winning the queen.

19 hxg4 ♕xg4 20 ♗f5! ♕xf4 21 ♗e6+ ♔e8 22 ♕a4+ ♖d7 23 ♖xd5 ♕c7 24 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 25 ♖d1 1-0

A very elegant game.

Game 29
Ulibin-Baburin
Vienna 1998

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 c6



5 ♗c4

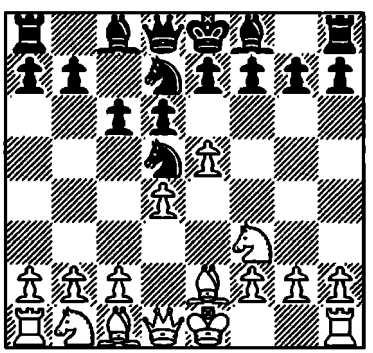
White can also gain space with 5 c4 but in this position Black's knight can retreat to an arguably superior square on c7 from where it may later harass White's d-pawn with ...♘e6. So 5...♘c7 and now:

a) White can prevent a pin on his f3 knight with 6 h3 but then Black can revert to a Kengis Variation type plan with 6...dxe5 7 ♘xe5 ♘d7 8 ♘f3 g6 9 ♘c3 ♗g7 10 ♗e2 b5! 11 0-0 (11 cxb5 ♘xb5 12 ♗xb5 cxb5 13 ♘xb5 ♗a6 would give Black excellent compensation for his pawn) 11...bxc4 12 ♗xc4 0-0 13 ♖e1 ♘b6 14 ♗b3 ½-½ Ramesh-Ibragimov, Sangli 2000.

b) 6 ♘c3 ♗g4 7 exd6 (in the game Al Sayed-Varga, Budapest 2001 White

carelessly played 7 h3?! and had his centre demolished after 7...♗xf3 8 ♕xf3 ♘e6! 9 ♗e3 dxe5 10 dxe5 ♘d7 11 ♕g3 ♕a5 12 f4 g5! 13 f5 ♘g7 14 ♕xg5 ♕xe5 15 g4 h5! with Black obtaining a strong initiative) 7...exd6 (7...♕xd6 is also possible) 8 h3 ♗h5 (and here Black could consider 8...♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 ♗e7, intending to castle and then mount pressure on d4) 9 g4 ♗g6 10 ♕b3 b6?! (10...♕c8 looks better, avoiding weaknesses in his queenside pawn structure) 11 ♗e3 ♗e7 12 ♗g2 0-0 13 h4 h5 14 gxh5 ♗xh5 15 ♘g5! and White had taken the initiative, McShane-Baburin, Kilkenny 1998.

The quiet 5 ♗e2 only has independent significance if Black plays 5...♘d7!?,

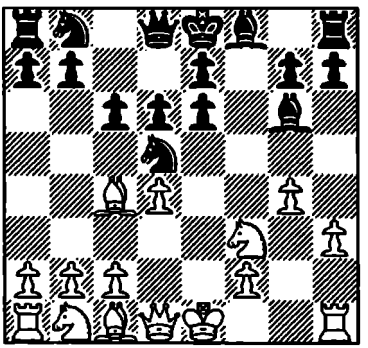


but then 6 0-0 dxe5 7 dxe5 ♘c5 8 c4 ♘c7 9 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10 ♘g5! ♔e8 11 ♗e3 ♘7e6 12 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 13 f4 gives White the better endgame according to Stoica. Also, after 5...dxe5 White can play 6 dxe5!? (6 ♘xe5 transposes into the 4...dxe5 5 ♘xe5 c6 line) 6...♗f5 7 ♘d4!? e6 8 ♘xf5 exf5 9 0-0 ♘d7 10 ♗c4 ♘7b6 11 ♗b3 ♗c5 12 ♕f3 g6 13 ♘c3 0-0 14 ♖d1, which gave him strong pressure in the game Smirin-Zelcic, Struga Zonal 1995.

5...♗g4 6 h3 ♗h5

6...♗xf3 7 ♕xf3 dxe5 8 dxe5 e6 is also very reasonable.

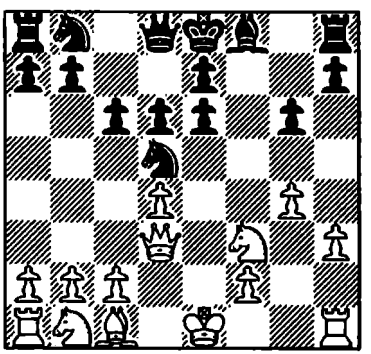
7 g4 ♗g6 8 e6 fxe6



9 ♗d3

Black can meet 9 ♕e2 ♘a6 10 ♘g5 (after 10 ♗xa6 there is 10...♕a5+ followed by ...♕xa6) with 10...♘ac7 11 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 12 ♕xe6 ♕d7 with equality. After the immediate 9 ♘g5 Black can play 9...e5.

9...♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 g6



11 c4

Ulibin and Lisenko mention a couple of alternatives. The attempt to charge down the h-file with 11 h4 can be met by 11...♕a5+ 12 ♗d2 ♕a6 13 ♕e4 ♘d7 14 ♘g5 ♘c7, whilst 11 ♘g5 allows

11...e5 12 c4 (12 dxe5 dxe5 13 c4 is met by 13...♘b4!) 12...♘f6 13 dxe5 ♕a5+ 14 ♘c3 ♕xe5+ 15 ♔d1 ♘a6 16 ♖e1 ♘c5 17 ♕d2 ♕h2 18 b4 with a full-blooded struggle in progress. These lines would require further analysis before any kind of conclusion could be reached.

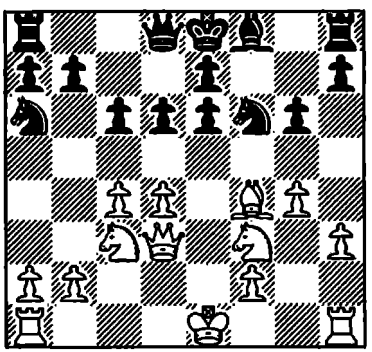
11...♘f6

11...♘c7 is strongly met by 12 h4, intending h4-h5.

12 ♘c3

12 ♘g5 would once again allow Black to play 12...e5, though once again the resulting position would be far from clear.

12...♘a6 13 ♗f4



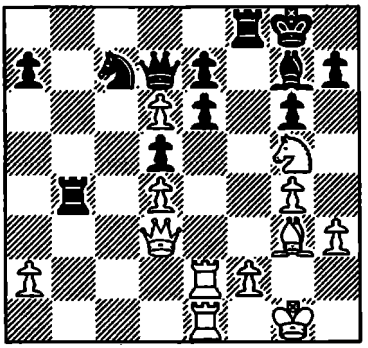
13...♘c7

An interesting alternative is 13...c5!?, undermining White's last remaining central pawn. Baburin's move is aimed more at solid defence, though it remains to be seen how Black will use his extra pawn.

14 0-0 ♗g7 15 ♖fe1 0-0 16 ♗g3 ♕d7 17 ♖ad1 b5 18 b3 bxc4 19 bxc4 ♖ab8 20 ♖e2 ♖b4 21 ♖de1 ♕c8 22 c5 ♕d7 23 ♘g5 ♘fd5 24 ♘xd5 cxd5

The intermediate 24...♖xd4 is bad because of 25 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 26 ♘xc7 etc.

25 cxd6



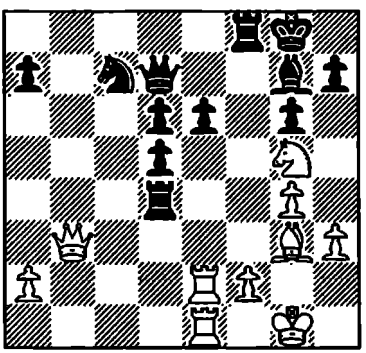
25...♖xd4?

A mistake. Black should play simply 25...exd6, after which 26 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 27 ♖xe6 ♗e5 28 ♖xg6+ hxg6 29 dxe5 is unclear.

26 ♕b3?

White in turn makes a mistake which comes close to costing him the game. He should play 26 ♕a3!, after which 26...♖a4 (or 26...♘b5 27 ♕b3) 27 ♕b3 exd6 28 ♗xd6 ♖xg4+ 29 hxg4 ♕xd6 30 ♕h3! is probably winning.

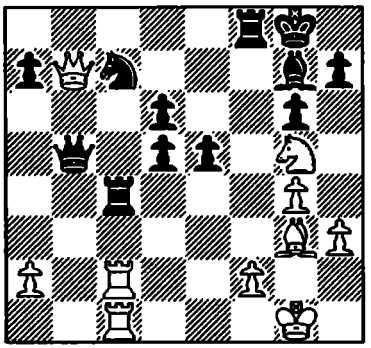
26...exd6



27 ♕b7!

And not 27 ♘xe6? because of 27...♘xe6 28 ♖xe6 ♗e5 winning the exchange.

27...e5 28 ♖c2 ♖c4 29 ♖ec1 ♕b5



30 ♖xc4

Giving up the queen is certainly the best practical chance. After 30 ♕xb5 ♘xb5 31 ♖xc4 dxc4 32 ♖xc4 ♘d4 the endgame is very bad for White.

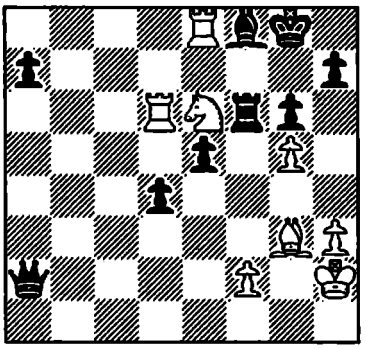
30...♕xb7 31 ♖xc7 ♕b2 32 ♘e6 ♖f7 33 ♖c8+ ♗f8 34 ♖1c6

After 34 ♖1c7 Black can play 34...h6! after which 35 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 36 ♘xf8 d4 makes the d-pawn difficult to stop.

34...♕b1+ 35 ♔h2

35 ♔g2? is even worse after 35...d4 36 ♖xd6 ♕b7+.

35...♕xa2 36 ♖xd6 d4 37 ♖e8 ♖f6 38 g5



38...♖xf2+?

A serious mistake which lets the win slip. Black should eliminate public enemy number one, the knight on e6. 38...♖xe6! 39 ♖dxe6 ♔f7 wins without much trouble.

39 ♗xf2 ♕xf2+ 40 ♔h1 ♕f1+ 41 ♔h2 ♕f2+ 42 ♔h1 ♕e1+ 43 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 44 ♔g3 ♕e3+ 45 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 46 ♔g3 ♕d3+ ½-½

Summary

If White wants something against 4...♘c6 he is almost forced to play a critical pawn sacrifice with 5 c4 ♘b6 6 e6!?; I don't believe that either 5 ♗b5 or 5 ♗e2 really offer him anything. This certainly makes 4...♘c6 an interesting weapon for games in which Black is prepared to take risks to win, but I strongly suspect that 7 ♗d3 is a strong move that gives White lasting compensation for his pawn.

Personally speaking, I feel that neither 4...c6 nor 4...g6 5 ♗c4 ♘b6 do enough to challenge White's centre, and if White maintains the cramping e5-pawn Black finds himself without a decent plan. The main advantage of 4...g6 might actually be to transpose into the Kengis variation by meeting 5 ♗c4 with 5...c6, and only reach lines of the Kengis in which White's bishop is on c4 already. With 4...dxe5 5 ♘xe5 g6 6 c4 looking like a problem for the Kengis Variation, this move order should certainly be a consideration for Black.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 g6

4...♘c6 5 c4 ♘b6 6 e6 fxe6 *(D)*

7 ♗d3 – *Game 28*

7 ♘g5 – *Game 27*

4...c6 – *Game 29*

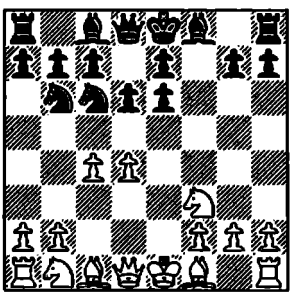
5 ♗c4 ♘b6 6 ♗b3 ♗g7 7 ♕e2

7 a4 dxe5 8 a5 ♘6d7 9 ♗xf7+ *(D)* – *Game 24*

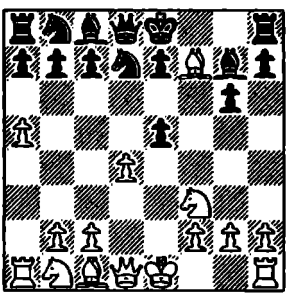
7...0-0 8 h3 a5 9 a4 ♘c6

9...dxe5 10 dxe5 ♘a6 – *Game 26*

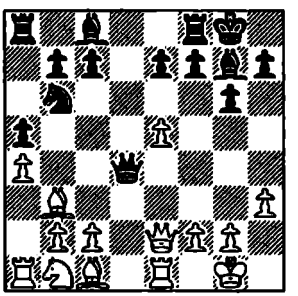
10 0-0 dxe5 11 dxe5 ♘d4 12 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 13 ♖e1 *(D)* – *Game 25*



6...fxe6

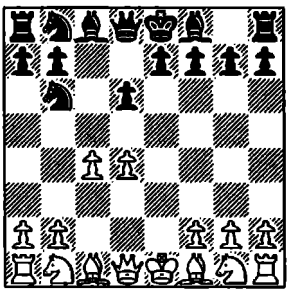


9 ♗xf7+



13 ♖e1

CHAPTER FIVE



Exchange Variation with 5...cxd6

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 cxd6

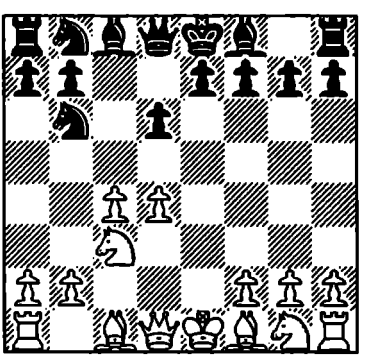
The Exchange Variation has always been known as a solid line but in the last couple of years it has come into its own. The so-called Voronezh variation with 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 b3 has been giving Black all sorts of trouble. It looks innocent enough, but the mass-evacuation of the a1-h8 diagonal makes it very difficult for Black to generate his thematic counterplay.

Game 30 shows how Black's counterplay usually develops; White is unable to play 10 d5 because of the strong reply, 10...♘a5!. Thus Black gets time for central action with 11...e5 or even 11...d5 12 c5 ♘c4. However, when White has already played the 'Voronezh' 9 b3, as soon as Black plays 9...♘c6 he gets hit with 10 d5! (Game 31).

Black has tried to combat the Voronezh in a number of different ways; perhaps the most intriguing of these being 9...f5 as in the notes to Game 32. Yet if this fails to pass the test posed by 10 g3, there may be little option other than 9...e5. This definitely gives White initiative after 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 12 c5! (Game 34) but these positions might be playable for Black.

Game 30
Levacic-Rogulj
Croatian Ch., Pula 1998

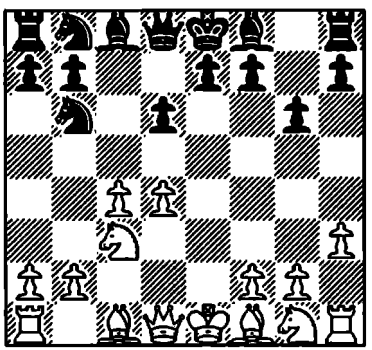
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 ♘c3



I successfully revived Hartston's old idea of 6 ♗e3 g6 7 h4 (7 d5 gives Black good play after 7...♗g7 8 ♗d4 ♗xd4 9 ♕xd4 0-0 10 ♘c3 e5!) in a critical last

round game which I needed to win for my first GM norm. Davies-Westerinen, Oslo 1987 continued 7...♗g7 8 h5 ♘c6 9 ♘c3 and now, rather than 9...d5, Black should have played 9...0-0 10 hxg6 fxg6, which I found Westerinen analysing with Jansa shortly after the game. Black's pawn structure isn't great, but he is well ahead on development.

6...g6 7 h3

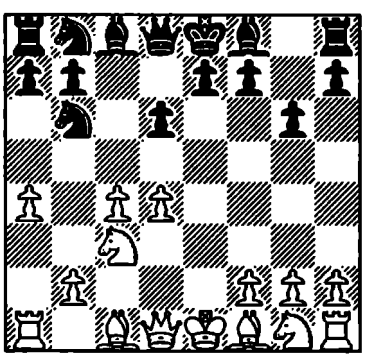


White wants to develop his knight on f3 without having it pinned by ...♗g4.

7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♗g4 10 ♗e3 ♘c6 11 b3 is known to be fine for Black after 11...d5 12 c5 ♘c8, a recent example being 13 b4 a6 14 ♖b1 e6 15 a4 ♘8e7 16 b5 axb5 17 axb5 ♗xf3 (17...♘a5 18 ♗f4 ♗xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♘f5 20 ♘e2 h5 21 h3 ♘h4 22 ♕d3 ♘c4 also gave Black good counterplay in Glauser-Varga, Zurich 2001) 18 gxf3?! (trying to keep control of c4, but the weakening of the kingside carries more weight) 18...♘a5 19 ♗d3 ♘c4 20 ♕e2 ♘xe3 21 fxe3 e5 22 dxe5 ♗xe5 23 ♘d1 ♖a3 24 ♖c1 d4 25 e4 ♕c7 26 ♖c2 ♗xh2+ 27 ♕xh2 ♕xh2+ 28 ♔xh2 ♖xd3 and Black went on to win in Zufic-Zelcic, Pula 2001.

Another means of preventing the pin on the knight is to continue developing with 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2, a plan used by the great Bobby Fischer. Black can then obtain adequate counterplay with 8...0-0 9 0-0 e5! (9...♘c6?! 10 d5 ♘e5 11 b3 leaves White with an annoying space advantage) 10 ♗e3 ♘c6 (10...f5!? 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 c5 ♘6d7 13 f3 a6 14 b4 ♘c6 {Trapl-Hoticka, Ceske Budejovice 1993} is also interesting) 11 d5 ♘b4 (11...♘e7 12 b3 ♘d7 13 ♘e4 ♘f5 14 ♗g5 f6 15 ♗d2 was good for White in Fischer-Berliner, US Ch., New York 1962/63) 12 b3 ♘xd3 13 ♕xd3 ♖e8!? (the 'obvious' 13...f5 is well met by 14 f4, shutting Black's light squared bishop out of the game) 14 ♖ac1 ♘d7 15 b4 a5 16 ♘b5 e4 17 ♕d2 ♘e5 and Black had taken the initiative in Jhunjunwala-Timman, Teeside 1974.

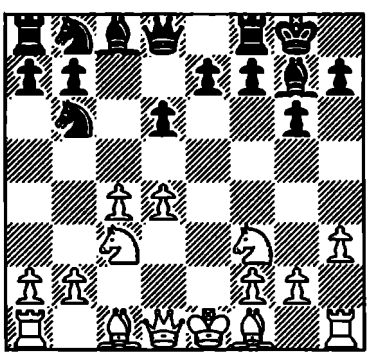
Having lost faith in the h-pawn push I used against Westerinen, I subsequently switched to an advance of my a-pawn with 7 a4.



The game that made me lose faith in this plan was Davies-Chekhov, Gausdal 1990, in which I got nothing from the opening after 7...a5 8 ♘f3 (the sharp 8 c5!? was successfully neutralised in Perovic-Begovac, Yugoslavia 1985:

8...dxc5 9 ♗b5+ ♘6d7 10 ♗f4 ♗g7 11 ♘d5 e5 12 dxe5 0-0 13 ♘f3 ♘c6 14 ♗g5 f6; Burgess has suggested that White should try to get this line with the moves h2-h4 and ...h7-h5 inserted, but Black should probably meet 8 h4 with 8...♗g7 9 h5 0-0 10 hxg6 fxg6 with a lead in development that offsets Black's weakened structure) 8...♗g7 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♗e2 ♘c6 11 d5 (without the moves a2-a4 and ...a7-a5 inserted this would be strongly answered by 11...♘a5; the negative side of White's plan is that Black gets an invulnerable outpost on c5 for his other knight) 11...♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♖a3 ♘c5 15 ♗d4 ♗xd4 16 ♕xd4 ♗d7 17 ♘b5 b6 18 ♖e1 ♖e8 19 ♗g4 f5 20 ♗f3 ♖c8 and a draw was agreed a few moves later.

7...♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0

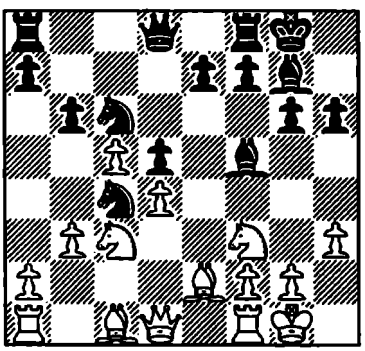


9 ♗e3

There's a strong argument for not putting this bishop on e3 so soon as it gets hit after the sequence ...d6-d5, c4-c5, ...♘c4. In fact there is a major alternative for White in 9 ♗e2 after which the main line runs 9...♘c6 10 0-0 ♗f5 and now:

a) After 11 ♗f4 h6 12 ♖c1 (12 ♕d2 g5 13 ♗e3 d5 14 c5 ♘c4 15 ♗xc4 dxc4 16 d5 ♘b4 17 h4 ♗d3 18 hxg5 hxg5 19 ♗xg5 ♘xd5 was good for Black in Adorjan-Eales, Groningen 1970) 12...e5 13 ♗e3 e4 14 ♘d2 d5 15 cxd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 17 ♗c4 ♕d8 Black had the better game in Geller-Vaganian, Moscow 1985.

b) 11 ♗g5!? h6 12 ♗e3 d5 13 c5 ♘c4 14 ♗c1 b6 15 b3



with a further split:

b1) It's starting to look as if the tempting 15...bxc5?! is good for White after 16 bxc4 cxd4 17 ♘xd5 and now:

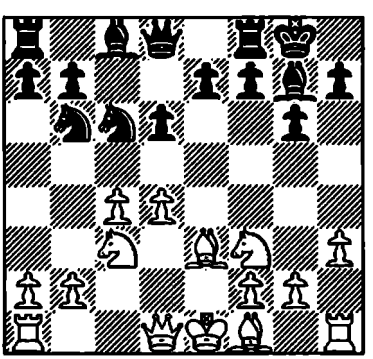
b11) 17...e6 18 ♗a3 exd5 (18...♖e8 19 ♘f4) 19 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 20 ♖c1 dxc4 21 ♗xc4 and Black had inadequate compensation for the exchange in Sermek-Sutter, Biel 1994.

b12) 17...d3 18 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♗xa1 20 ♗xh6 ♗g7 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♕c3+ ♔g8 (22...f6 23 ♘g5 ♕d6 24 ♘c7 was also good for White in Khmelnitsky-Pesotsky, Kiev 1989) 23 ♖e1 ♖e8 (or 23...♕a5 24 ♕e3 threatening 25 ♕h6, as in Khmelnitsky-Kozlov, Naberezhny Chelny 1986) 24 ♘e5 ♘xe5 25 ♕xe5 and White had powerful threats in Hervet-Cimolai, correspondence 1993.

b2) 15...♘4a5 16 cxb6 axb6 17 ♗e3 (White can also play 17 ♗f4 when Sermek-Moscatelli, Vienna 1991 continued 17...g5 18 ♗g3 ♘b4 19 ♕d2 ♘ac6 20 ♖fc1 ♗e4 21 ♘b5 ♗xf3 22 ♗xf3 ♖c8 23 h4 with an edge for White) 17...♔h7 18 ♖c1 ♗e6 19 ♕d2 and I, for one, prefer White due to the awkward positions of Black's knights and the outpost on b5 (Brodsky-Pesotsky, Ukrainian Ch., Kharkov 1988).

In view of the fact that the main line looks rather good for White, I suggest taking at look at Black's treatment in the game Rechel-Movszeszian, Germany 1995; after 9...e5!? 10 ♗g5 f6 11 ♗e3 ♗e6! 12 d5 ♗f7 13 0-0 ♘a6 he obtained a compact and harmonious position.

9...♘c6

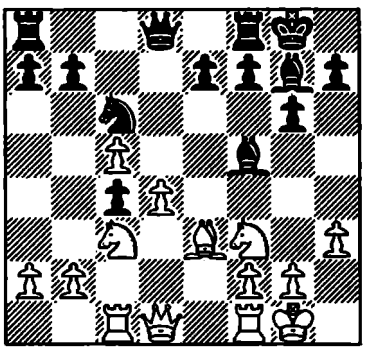


10 ♖c1

The immediate 10 d5?! allows 10...♘a5! 11 ♗d4 e5! 12 dxe6 ♗xe6 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♕d4+ ♕f6 15 b3 d5! 16 c5 ♘d7 17 ♕xf6+ ♘xf6 when Black had the initiative in Mikac-Khmelnitsky, Sibenik 1989.

10...e5

I am not convinced that Black is worse after 10...d5 11 c5 ♘c4 12 ♗xc4 dxc4 13 0-0 ♗f5.



Lev Alburt has analysed this position with White's queen's rook on a1 rather than c1, but it seems to me that it doesn't make a massive difference:

a) In *The Complete Alekhine* Burgess gave Gipslis-Ciocaltea, Bucharest 1968 as better for White after 14 b3 ♗d3 15 ♖e1 ♘xd4 16 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 17 bxc4 ♗xe3 18 ♖xe3 ♗xc4 19 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 20 ♖xe7 but I think that Black can equalise with 20...b5! 21 c6 (or 21 ♘e4 ♔f8) 21...♖ac8 22 c7 ♖d6 etc.

b) 14 ♕a4 and now:

b1) Not 14...♗d3 15 ♖fd1 ♘xd4? (15...e5 16 d5 ♘d4 17 ♘e1!) 16 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♖xd3 and White wins material.

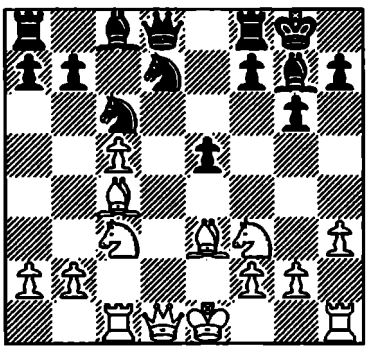
b2) 14...e5 15 ♖fd1 (15 dxe5 is met by 15...♗d3 16 ♖fd1 ♘xe5, and 15 d5 by 15...♘d4) 15...exd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 18 ♕xc4 ♗xf2+ 19 ♔xf2 and now 19...♕g5!? produces a sharp position in which both sides have chances (after 19...♕f6 20 ♕d4! ♕xd4+ 21 ♖xd4 ♖ac8, the move 22 ♘d5 takes advantage of the fact that White's rook is on c1 already).

11 dxe5 dxe5

The fighting move, but Black may

have a simpler route to equality in 11...♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♗e2 ♗e6 14 b3 d5 15 cxd5 ♗xc3+ 16 ♖xc3 ♘xd5 17 ♖d3 ♘xe3, as in Serper-Yermolinsky, Tilburg 1994.

12 c5 ♘d7 13 ♗c4



13...♕a5

It isn't quite clear what Black's strongest move is at this stage. He has tried two other moves with reasonable results:

a) 13...h6 14 0-0 ♔h7 15 ♘d2 f5 16 f3 ♘d4 17 ♘b3 ♘b8 18 ♘b5 ♘bc6 (18...♘xb5 19 ♗xb5 ♘c6 20 ♕d6 ♕e8 21 ♘a5 ♖f6 22 ♕d2 was slightly better for White in Zagrebelny-Varga, Budapest 1993) 19 ♘3xd4 ♘xd4 20 ♘d6 b6 21 b4 a5 22 a3 produced a very complex struggle in Pergel-Nataf, World U16 Ch., Szeged 1994.

b) 13...♘d4 14 ♘e4 (14 ♘xd4 exd4 15 ♗xd4 ♖e8+ 16 ♘e2 ♕a5+ recovers the c5-pawn with equality) 14...b6 15 ♗g5 ♕c7 16 ♗e7 ♗b7! 17 c6 (17 ♗xf8 ♗xe4 gives Black compensation for the exchange) 17...♕xc6 18 ♘eg5 ♔h8 19 ♗d3? (19 ♘xf7+? ♖xf7 20 ♗xf7 ♕e4+ 21 ♔f1 ♗a6+ 22 ♔g1 ♘e2+ 23 ♔h2 ♕f4+ wins for Black, but both 19 ♗xf7 ♘xf3+ 20 gxf3 and 19 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 20 0-0 ♗h6 are messy) 19...♘c5 20 ♗e4 ♕b5 21 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 and Black had a winning attack in Grzesik-Hartman, German Bundesliga 1985.

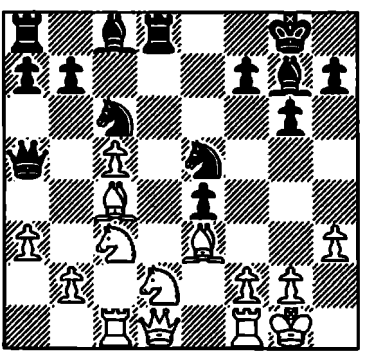
14 a3 e4 15 ♘d2

15 ♘d4 gives White nothing after 15...♘xd4 16 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♕xc5 etc.

15...♘de5!?

15...♘xc5 16 b4 ♕xa3 17 ♗xc5 ♗xc3 18 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 19 b5 was good for White in Zagrebelny-Remizov, St Petersburg 1994.

16 0-0 ♖d8



17 ♕b3

A mistake, according to Finkel. An earlier game (Glauser-Varga, Zurich 2000) went 17 ♘cxe4 ♘xc4 18 ♖xc4 ♗xb2 (18...♗e6!? is a natural alternative) 19 ♗g5 ♖e8 (19...♖d5 20 ♕b3 ♗g7 21 ♖a4 wins material and 19...♖f8 20 ♗f6 ♗e5 21 ♘f3 ♗xf6 22 ♘xf6+ ♔g7 23 ♕a1 threatens a deadly discovered check) 20 ♗f6 (20 ♕b3 ♗g7 21 ♘d6 ♖f8 22 ♘xb7 ♕c7 is fine for Black) 20...♘e5 21 ♖c2 ½-½, though according to Finkel White is much better in this final position.

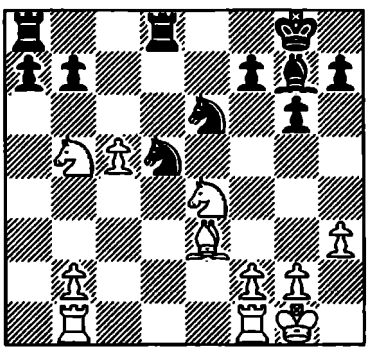
17...♘d4 18 ♕b4 ♕xb4 19 axb4 ♘d3 20 ♖b1

After 20 ♗xd3 exd3 21 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 22 b5 Black keeps an edge with 22...♖b4.

20...♘xb4 21 ♘dxe4 ♗e6 22 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 23 ♘b5

Or 23 ♘d6 b6.

23...♘d5



24 ♗g5

After this White loses a pawn. The most tenacious line was 24 b4 a5 25 bxa5 ♘xe3 26 fxe3 f5 27 ♘ed6 ♘xc5 28 ♖fc1 with drawing chances.

24...f6 25 ♗c1

25 ♗h4 is no better as 25...g5 26 ♗g3 f5 27 ♘ed6 f4 shuts White's bishop out of the game.

25...f5 26 ♘g5 ♘xc5 27 b4 ♘e4 28 ♘e6 ♖d7 29 ♖d1 a6 30 ♘xg7 axb5 31 ♗b2 ♔f7 32 g4 fxg4 33 hxg4 ♖ad8 34 ♖d4 ♘dc3 35 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 36 ♖e1 ♖d1 37 ♖xd1 ♘xd1 38 ♗d4 ♘dxf2 0-1

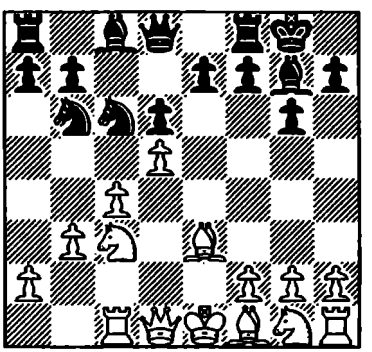
Game 31
Nedev-Oney
Heraklio 1997

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 b3

The so-called 'Voronezh Variation', which has been giving Black some serious headaches.

9 ♘f3 gives Black excellent play after 9...♗g4 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 (11 gxf3? d5 12 c5 ♘c4 13 ♗xc4 dxc4 14 0-0 ♘c6 15 ♘e2 e5 16 d5 ♘b4 was good for Black in Shovunov-Solozhenkin, Russian Ch., Elista 1996) 11...♘c6 12 ♕d1 d5 13 c5 ♘c4 14 ♗xc4 dxc4 15 d5 ♘b4 16 0-0 ♘d3 17 ♖c2 ♖c8, as in Levin-Shainswit, Ventnor City 1944.

9...♘c6?! 10 d5



The point of the Voronezh set-up and White's mass evacuation of the a1-h8 diagonal. Usually this advance would be met by 10...♘a5, with embarrassing pressure on the c-pawn. In this position there would no pressure whatsoever, just a badly placed black knight.

10...♘e5

10...♘b8 is no better; White keeps an edge after 11 ♗e2 e5 12 dxe6 ♗xe6 13 ♘f3 ♘c6 14 0-0.

11 ♗e2 ♘ed7

One of several alternatives, but in every case White's space advantage is the position's most important factor:

a) 11...f5 12 f4 ♘g4 (12...♗h6 13 ♕d2 ♘f7 14 ♘f3 e5 15 dxe6 ♗xe6 16

0-0 was also good for White in Pedersen-Hjorth, Aalborg 1995) 13 ♗d4 e5 14 dxe6 ♗xe6 15 ♘f3 ♖e8 16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 0-0 and White had an edge because of the weakness of d6, Howell-Panchenko, Hamburg 1995.

b) 11...♖e8!? 12 ♘f3 e6 13 dxe6 ♗xe6 14 ♘xe5 (14 ♘d4!?) 14...♗xe5 15 0-0 d5!? 16 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 17 cxd5 ♖ad8 18 ♗c4 ♗f5 19 ♕d2 a6 20 a4 ♕d6 21 g3 h5 22 ♖fe1 produced a position in which it is difficult for White to convert his extra pawn, though he's certainly on the positive side of the position, Kuczynski-Nokka, Nordic Team Ch., Pohja 1985.

c) 11...h5!? 12 f4 (the most direct line, but the simple 12 ♘f3 also looks good) 12...♘g4 13 ♗d4 ♗h6 14 ♘h3 e5 15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♗xg4 hxg4 17 ♕xg4 with a huge edge in Howell-Trifunovic, Hastings 1995.

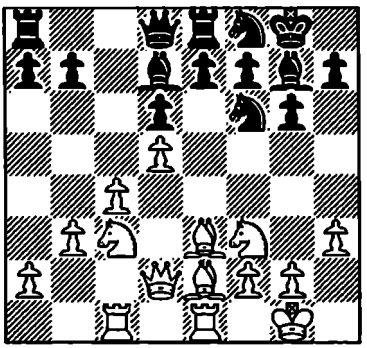
d) 11...e6 12 f4! ♘ed7 (12...♗h6 13 ♕d2! ♘g4 14 ♗xg4 ♕h4+ 15 ♕f2 ♕xg4 16 h3 ♕f5 17 g4 ♕d3 18 ♘ge2 exd5 19 ♖d1 trapped Black's queen in Raecki-Velicka, Apolda 1992) 13 dxe6 fxe6 14 ♕xd6 e5 15 ♘f3 exf4 16 ♗xf4 ♘c5 17 0-0 ♗g4 18 h3 ♗xc3 19 hxg4 left White with a good extra pawn in the encounter V.Ivanov-Bagirov, Moscow 1995.

e) 11...a5 12 f4 ♘ed7 13 ♘f3 ♘c5 14 0-0 ♗g4 15 ♗d4 ♗xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♗xd4+ 17 ♕xd4 ♘bd7 18 ♗f1 ♕b6 19 ♖e1 left White with pressure against e7 in the game Emms-McDonald, Hastings 1997/98.

12 ♘f3 ♘f6 13 h3

13 ♘d4 is also good.

13...♘bd7 14 0-0 ♖e8 15 ♖e1 ♘f8 16 ♕d2 ♗d7



17 b4

Starting to advance his queenside pawn majority, but there was an argument for further suppression before trying to do anything active. White could also restrain Black's next move with 17 ♖cd1 and an earlier improvement might have been 15 ♕d2 followed by 16 ♖ed1.

17...e6 18 ♘d4

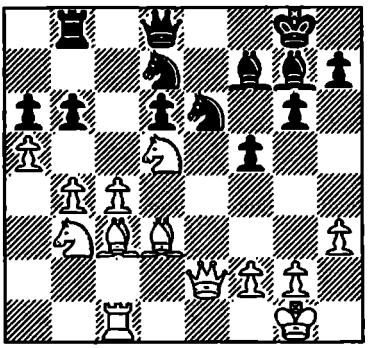
White could also consider 18 dxe6 ♗xe6 19 ♖ed1 but this might have been psychologically difficult to play because it frees Black's pieces to some extent.

18...a6 19 ♘b3

Finkel recommended that White first play 19 dxe6 ♘xe6 and only then 20 ♘b3, after which 20...♗c6 21 ♖cd1 ♕c7 22 a4! (and not 22 ♕xd6? ♕xd6 23 ♖xd6 ♗f8) 22...♖ad8?! 23 a5 is very unpleasant for Black. But in any case the position looks better for White.

19...♖c8 20 ♘a5 b6 21 ♘b3 exd5 22 ♘xd5 ♘e4 23 ♕d1 ♖b8 24 ♗d4 f6 25 ♗d3 ♘g5 26 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 27 ♕e2 ♘ge6 28 ♗c3 ♗f7 29 a4!? ♘d7 30 a5 f5

30...bxa5 31 ♘xa5 ♖c8 looks better, avoiding any further weakening of the dark squares.



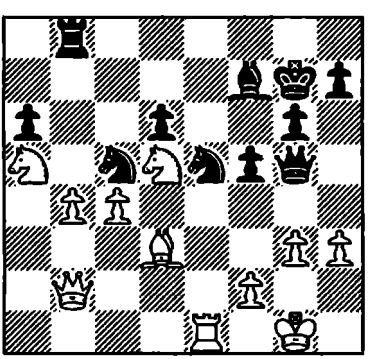
31 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 32 ♖e1

32 ♕b2+!? would force 32...♔h6 (not 32...♔g8? 33 axb6 ♘xb6 34 ♘f6+) but then it isn't easy to capitalise on the position of Black's king.

32...♕g5 33 g3?!

With the time control approaching, White starts to lose his way – this weakens f3. Finkel suggested 33 axb6 ♘xb6 34 ♕b2+ ♔h6 35 ♘xb6 ♖xb6 36 g3! when 36...♖xb4? is met by 37 h4 followed by a fork from d2.

33...bxa5 34 ♘xa5 ♘e5! 35 ♕b2!? ♘c5



36 ♘f4??

A blunder. White could force a draw with 36 ♖xe5! ♘xd3 37 ♖xf5+ ♘xb2 38 ♖xg5 ♗e6 39 ♘c7 ♗xc4 40 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 41 ♘xa6 ♖b6 42 ♘c7 etc.

36...♕f6! 37 ♕e2 ♖xb4 38 ♗c2 ♖b2! 39 ♘d5 ♗xd5 40 cxd5 ♖xc2 41 ♕xc2 ♘f3+ 42 ♔f1 ♘xe1 43 ♔xe1 ♕a1+ 0-1

Game 32
Sofronie-Zlatic
Brasov 1998

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 b3 ♗f5

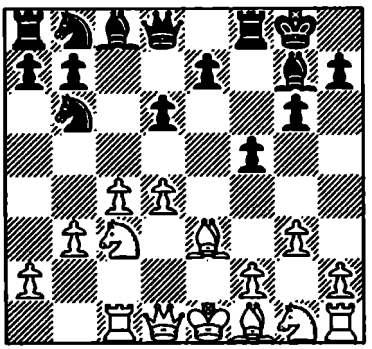
Black's most popular alternative to 9...e5 is the interesting 9...f5!?, which aims for active counterplay at the cost of structural weaknesses. After this move we have the following possibilities to consider:

a) 10 d5 is adequately met by 10...f4 11 ♗d4 e5 12 dxe6 ♗xd4 13 ♕xd4 ♘c6 14 ♕d2 ♗xe6 15 ♘f3 ♕e7 16 ♗e2 d5 17 cxd5 ♖ad8 when Black recovered the pawn with an okay position in Milu-Ignatescu, Romania 1995.

b) 10 ♘h3 looks logical but the knight can become misplaced on h3. The game Malisauskas-Kupreichik, played in the Moscow Olympiad 1994 continued 10...h6 11 f4 ♗e6 12 d5 ♗f7 13 ♗e2 ♖e8 14 0-0 e6 15 dxe6 ♖xe6 16 ♗d4 ♗xd4+ 17 ♕xd4 ♘c6 18 ♕f2 ♘d7 19 ♗f3 ♘f6 with a reasonable position for Black.

c) 10 ♘f3 is probably best met by Burgess's suggestion of 10...f4 11 ♗d2 e5!? 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 c5 e4!? 14 ♘xe4 ♖e8 15 cxb6 ♖xe4+ 16 ♗e3!? ♕xd1+ 17 ♔xd1 ♗f5 with messy complications.

d) White's most promising reply seems to be 10 g3



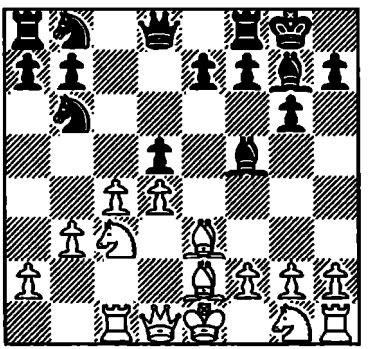
10...e5 11 dxe5 dxe5 (11...♗xe5?! 12 ♘h3 would see White's pieces converge on the weak d5-square) 12 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 13 c5 f4 14 ♗d2 ♘6d7 15 ♗c4+ ♔h8 (15...♔f8 16 ♘d5 ♘xc5 17 ♘c7 b6 18 ♘xa8 ♗b7 19 ♘c7 fxg3 20 hxg3 ♗xh1 21 ♗b4 ♗h6 22 ♖c2 ♖c8 23 ♘e6+ ♔e8 24 ♗xc5 bxc5 25 f3 ♗e3 26 ♖h2 ♗xg1 27 ♖xh1 is good for White according to Ardeleanu, but such long variations may contain improvements for both sides) 16 ♘b5 ♘xc5 17 ♘c7 b6 18 ♘xa8 ♗b7 19 f3 ♗xa8 20 b4 ♘e4 21 fxe4 ♗xe4 22 ♘h3 ♗xh1 23 ♘g5 and the threat of ♘f7+ had Black in trouble in the game Pavasovic-Bawart, Bled 1998.

I'm not sure that all of Black's 9th move alternatives have been properly investigated. One further possibility is the super-solid 9...e6, intending to develop with ...♘c6 and ...♗d7 and then eventually play ...d6-d5. Another idea is 9...♗d7, intending either ...e7-e5 (without allowing the exchange of queens) or going back to the solid plan of ...e7-e6 and ...♘c6. I think that these ideas merit further investigation.

10 ♗e2

Another possibility for White is 10 d5, with White keeping a solid space advantage after 10...♘a6?! (I prefer 10...e5!? 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 intending ...d6-d5) 11 ♘f3 ♗g4 12 ♗e2 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♘c5 14 b4 ♘cd7 15 ♕b3 ♖c8 16 ♗e2 ♘f6 17 0-0 in Yagupov-Petit, Ubeda 1996.

10...d5?!



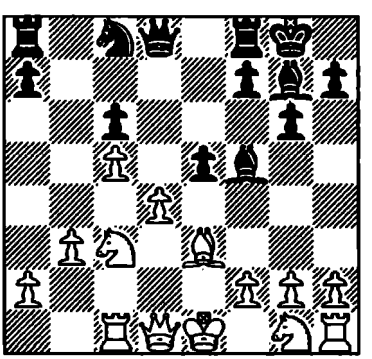
The idea behind 9...♗f5, but White can now force a clear advantage.

11 c5 ♘c8 12 ♗f3! ♘c6

Attempting to counterattack. 12...e6 can be met by 13 g4 and 12...♗e6 is answered by 13 ♘ge2, intending ♘f4.

13 ♗xd5 e5 14 ♗xc6 bxc6

Or 14...exd4 15 ♗xb7 ♖b8 16 ♗f3 dxe3 17 ♕xd8 exf2+ 18 ♔xf2 ♖xd8 19 ♘ge2 etc.



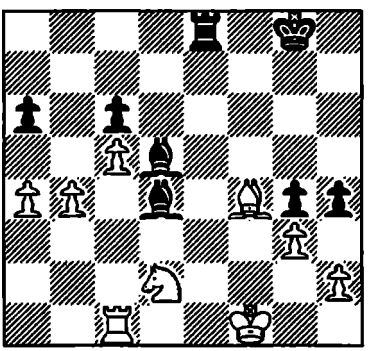
15 dxe5?!

Allowing Black to get some compensation for his pawn. After 15 ♘ge2 he has nothing.

15...♗xe5 16 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 17 ♘f3 ♗g7 18 0-0 ♘e7 19 ♗g5 ♖d7 20 ♖fe1 ♘d5 21 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 22 ♖ed1 ♗e4 23 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 24 ♘d2 f5 25 ♔f1

Black's bishops dominate and the position is even becoming dangerous for White. 25 h4 would have been a better idea, preventing the following kingside pawn advance.

25...h6 26 ♗e7 ♖e8 27 ♗d6 g5 28 f3 g4 29 ♗f4 h5 30 a4 ♗d4 31 b4 a6 32 fxg4? fxg4 33 g3? h4!



With the terrible threat of 34...h3 followed by 35...♗g2 mate – and there's nothing White can do.

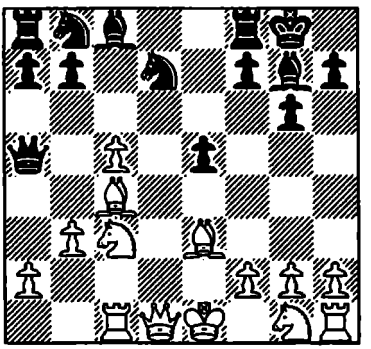
34 ♖e1 ♗g2+ 35 ♔xg2 0-1

Game 33
Rowson-Baburin
Port Erin 1999

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 b3 e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 c5

For 11 ♕xd8 see the next game. Rowson's move was also highly regarded until Baburin's 12th move novelty.

11...♘6d7 12 ♗c4 ♕a5!

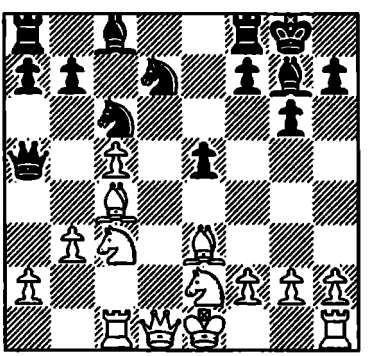


An important new move which forces White to develop his knight on a far more passive square than he'd like. After 12...♘c6 White can play 13 ♘f3.

13 ♘ge2

The point of Black's move order is that 13 ♘f3 can now be answered by 13...e4 14 ♘d4 ♘xc5.

13...♘c6



14 a3

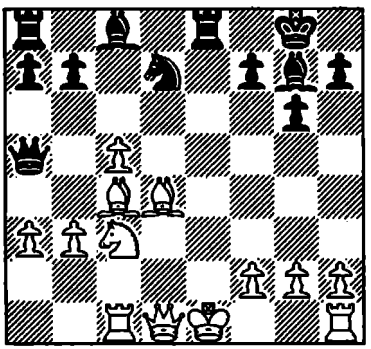
An attempt to exploit the position of Black's queen, which meets with a strong reply. Another possibility is 14

♗d2 ♕xc5 15 ♘b5 (threatening ♗f7) 15...♕e7 16 ♘c7 ♖b8 17 ♘d5 ♕h4 and although White has the initiative it's hardly worth a pawn.

14...♘d4!

14...♕xa3?? would lose the queen after 15 ♖a1 ♕b4 16 ♖a4, but now Black threatens both a3 and c5.

15 ♘xd4 exd4 16 ♗xd4 ♖e8+



17 ♔f1

The loss of castling rights shows that things have gone wrong for White, though Rowson certainly makes a fight of it. 17 ♗e2 would have been worse, losing a pawn for inadequate compensation after the sequence 17...♗xd4 18 ♕xd4 ♕xa3 19 ♖d1! ♕xc5 20 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 21 ♘d5 ♖e5! 22 f4 (or 22 b4 ♗e6 23 ♘f6+ ♔g7 24 f4 ♖xe2+ 25 ♔xe2 ♔xf6 26 bxc5 ♗g4+) 22...♖xe2+ 23 ♔xe2 ♗g4+ etc.

17...♗xd4 18 ♕xd4 ♕xa3 19 ♕f4 ♘f6! 20 ♘b5! ♕b2 21 ♘d6

It looks as if White has obtained a powerful initiative for his pawn, but Baburin's next move turns the tables.

21...♗e6! 22 ♖d1

If White accepts the exchange sacrifice it isn't clear how he should complete his development. Volzhin gave the variation 22 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 23 h4 ♘h5! 24 ♕h6 ♗xc4+ 25 bxc4 ♖e2 26 ♔g1 ♖xf2 27 ♖h2 ♘f4 28 ♕g5 h6! when Black wins.

22...♖ad8 23 h4 ♗xc4+

Volzhin pointed out another possibility for Black in 23...♕e5!?, after which 24 ♕xe5 ♗xc4+ 25 bxc4 ♖xe5 gives Black a winning ending.

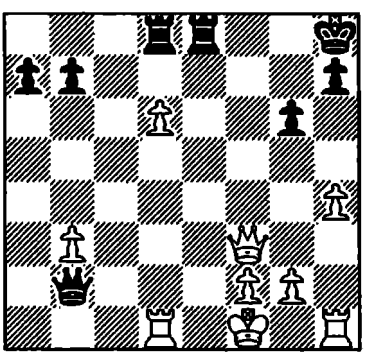
24 ♕xc4 ♘e4?

A serious mistake. Volzhin pointed out that simply 24...♖e6 is strong, threatening both ...♘e4 and ...♘e8.

25 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 26 ♕f3 ♘xd6

26...♘d2+ would also lead to a draw after 27 ♖xd2 ♕xd2 28 ♕f6+ ♔g8 29 ♕f7+ ♔h8 30 ♕f6+ ♔g8 etc.

27 cxd6 ♖f8 28 ♕e3 ♖fe8 29 ♕f3



29...♕e5?

Playing on through momentum rather than any objective merit of the position. Black should repeat the position.

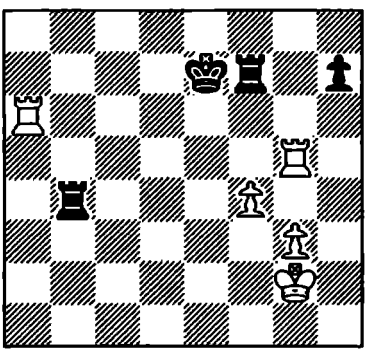
30 h5! ♖xd6 31 hxg6 ♖xg6 32 ♖h5!

Finally developing the king's rook. Now White is better because of Black's exposed king.

32...♕e7 33 ♖f5 ♔g8 34 g3 ♕e6 35 ♔g2 a6 36 ♖d4 ♕c6 37 ♕xc6 bxc6?

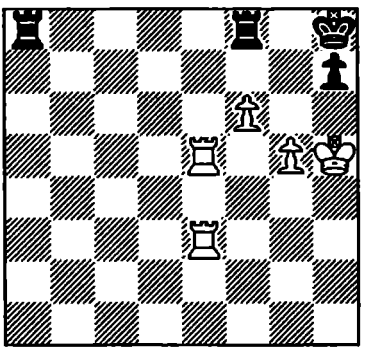
Black's nerve is going. Allowing White's rooks to the seventh rank is certainly a lesser evil than the crippling of his queenside pawns. After 37...♖xc6 38 ♖d7 Black defends himself with 38...b6 39 ♖ff7 h6 40 ♖g7+ ♔h8 41 ♖h7+ ♔g8 42 ♖dg7+ ♔f8 43 ♖a7 ♔g8 etc. – the rooks can check but they can't deliver mate.

38 ♖a5 ♖b8 39 b4 ♖a8 40 ♖d1 ♖f6 41 ♖d7 ♖af8 42 f4 ♖6f7 43 ♖d6 ♖b8 44 ♖xc6 ♖xb4 45 ♖c8+ ♔g7 46 ♖g5+ ♔f6 47 ♖c6+ ♔e7 48 ♖e5+ ♔f8 49 ♖c8+ ♔g7 50 ♖g5+ ♔f6 51 ♖c6+ ♔e7 52 ♖xa6



If there were only one pair of rooks on the board then Black should be able to draw. But now his king is a constant source of worry, which adds considerably to the burden of defence.

52...♖b8 53 ♔h3 ♔f8 54 ♔h4 ♖g7 55 ♖c5 ♔g8 56 g4 ♖gb7 57 ♖cc6 ♖f7 58 f5 ♖d7 59 ♖c3 ♖db7 60 ♖cc6 ♖d7 61 ♔g5 ♔g7 62 ♖c3 ♖db7 63 ♔h5 ♖f7 64 ♖ac6 ♖a8 65 ♔g5 ♖b8 66 ♖3c5 ♖bf8 67 ♖b6 ♖a7 68 f6+ ♔g8 69 ♔h6 ♖a1 70 ♖g5+ ♔h8 71 ♖h5 ♖f1 72 g5 ♖g8 73 ♖h4 ♖f5 74 ♖g4 ♖f1 75 ♖bb4 ♖h1+ 76 ♖h4 ♖g1 77 ♖bg4 ♖f1 78 ♖f4 ♖g1 79 ♖f5 ♖c1 80 ♖h3 ♖c7 81 ♔h5 ♖f7 82 ♖e3 ♖a8 83 ♖fe5 ♖ff8



84 ♔h6?

Missing a win with 84 ♖e7 ♖a1 (84...♖g8 85 f7 ♖gf8 86 ♖e8 ♔g7 87 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 88 ♖e8) 85 ♖e1 ♖xe1 86 ♖xe1, followed by ♖e7 and ♔h6.

84...♖a1 85 ♖h3 ♖g8 86 ♖e7 ♖g6+ 87 ♔h5 ♖g1 88 ♖e8+ ♖g8 89 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 90 ♖a3 ♖h1+ 91 ♔g4 ♖g1+ 92 ♔f4 ♖f1+ 93 ♔g4 ♖g1+ 94 ♔f4 ♖f1+ 95 ♖f3 ♖a1?!

Black could already force a draw with 95...♖xf3+! 96 ♔xf3 ♔f7, followed by ...h7-h6. Next time round he grabs this opportunity.

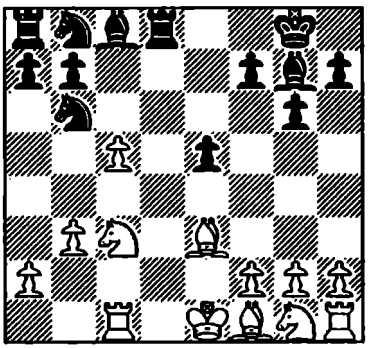
96 ♖b3 ♖f1+ 97 ♔e5 ♖e1+ 98 ♔f4 ♖f1+ 99 ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 100 ♔xf3 ♔f7 101 ♔f4 h6 102 gxh6 ½-½

Game 34
Honfi-Varga
Budapest 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 c4 ♘b6 4 d4 d6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 b3 e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 12 c5!

The critical line. 12 ♘b5 is answered

by 12...♘c6! 13 ♘xa7 ♘d4! 14 ♘xc8 ♘xc8 15 ♗xd4 exd4 16 a4 d3!, when Black had a very strong initiative in the game Chernishov-Friesler, Pardubice 1992.

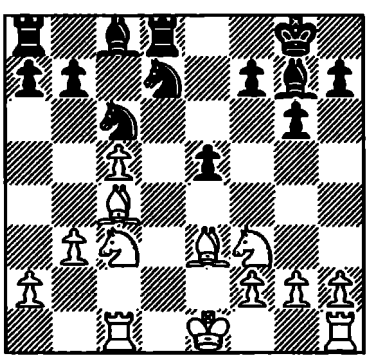


12...♘6d7

And not 12...♘d5? 13 ♖d1 ♗e6 14 ♗c4, winning a piece.

13 ♗c4 ♘c6 14 ♘f3

Another possibility is 14 ♘e4!? ♘f8 15 ♘d6 ♘e6 16 ♘f3 ♘cd4 17 ♘g5 ♘xg5 18 ♗xg5 ♖d7, which also gave White a slight edge in Yagupov-Ukolov, Moscow 1996.

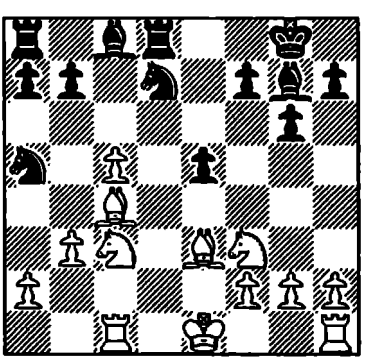


14...♘a5

The bishop on c4 is public enemy number one. Black has tried a couple of alternatives but neither has produced satisfactory results.

a) 14...♘d4 15 ♘g5 ♖f8 16 ♘ce4 ♘f5 17 0-0 (17 ♘xf7!? ♖xf7 18 ♘g5 ♘h6 19 ♘e6 {Olsson-Zetterberg, Borlange 1995} should be met by 19...b5! 20 ♗d5 ♘f6! 21 ♗xa8 ♗xe6 with complex play) 17...♘f6 18 ♘d6 ♘xd6 19 cxd6 ♗d7 20 ♖fd1 a6 21 f3 and White had an edge because of the passed d-pawn in Dzindzichashvili-Alburt, US Ch. 1996.

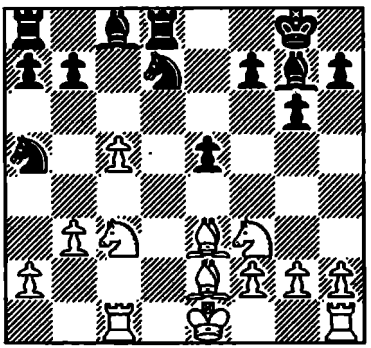
b) 14...h6 15 ♘e4 (Emms has also suggested 15 0-0) 15...♘a5 (15...♘f8 16 ♘d6 ♖d7 17 0-0 ♖e7 18 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 19 ♖fd1 left White slightly better in Gross-Bagirov, Berlin 1996, whilst 15...♘d4 can be met by 16 ♘d6 ♘xf3+ 17 gxf3 ♖f8 18 ♖g1, threatening 19 ♖xg6, according to Raetsky) 16 ♗d5 (16 ♗e2 ♘f8 17 ♘d6 also gives Black a difficult game according to Sanakoev) 16...♘f6 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18 ♖d1 ♔g7 19 0-0 ♖e8 20 ♘d2 and White had a definite advantage in Finkel-Drazic, Nova Gorica 1997.



15 ♗g5!?

Certainly a tempting move, but possibly not the best. Both Emms and Sanakoev suggest that the quiet 15 ♗e2 is much more difficult for Black, and it

does seem as if he is struggling in all variations:

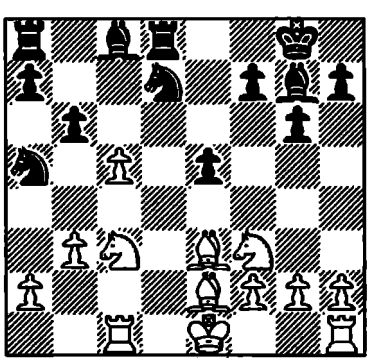


a) 15...h6 16 0-0 ♘f8 17 ♘e4 ♘c6 18 ♘d6 ♖b8 19 a3 f5 20 ♖fd1 ♗e6 21 b4 started the key push of White's queenside pawns in Hunt-Schnabel, Oxford 1998.

b) 15...♘c6 16 ♘b5 ♘f8 17 ♘d6 ♘e6 18 ♗c4 ♘cd4 19 ♘g5 also gave White strong pressure in Mitkov-Toth, Rio de Janeiro 2000.

c) 15...♘f8 16 0-0 ♘c6 17 ♖fd1 ♗f5 18 ♘b5 ♘e6 19 ♘d6 ♖ab8 20 ♘g5 ♘xg5 21 ♗xg5 was again pleasant for White in Mitkov-Dischinger, Sitges 1997.

d) 15...b6



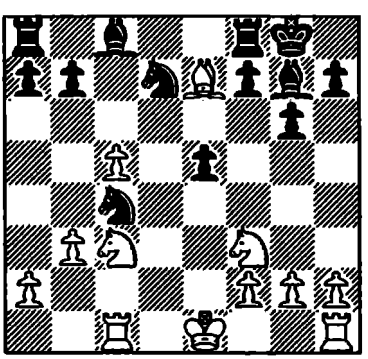
16 ♘a4!? (16 cxb6 ♘xb6 17 ♘b5 ♗b7 18 0-0 ♘d5 19 ♖fd1 was played in Varga-Llanos, Budapest 1999, and now Finkel suggested 19...♘xe3! 20 fxe3 e4 21 ♘fd4 ♗f8! with equality) 16...bxc5 17 0-0 c4 18 b4 ♘c6 19 ♗xc4 ♘xb4 20 a3 ♘a6 21 ♘g5 (threatening both the f7-pawn and ♗d5) was deeply unpleasant for Black in the game Kiik-Hautala, Tampere 2000.

15...♖f8

Black has another possibility in 15...♖e8!?, the game Sanakoev-Honfi, correspondence 1993-5 continuing 16 ♘b5 e4! 17 ♘c7 exf3+ 18 ♘xe8 fxg2 19 ♖g1 ♘xc4 20 ♖xc4 ♘e5 21 ♖c3 ♗g4 22 ♘xg7 ♘f3+ 23 ♖xf3 ♗xf3 24 ♗f6 ♖c8 25 ♔d2 (and not 25 b4 ♖c6 26 ♗d4 f6 27 ♘e8 ♖e6+) 25...♖xc5 26 ♗d4, reaching a highly complex endgame which is probably about equal, according to Sanakoev.

16 ♗e7 ♘xc4

After 16...♖e8 there follows 17 ♘d5 ♘xc4 18 ♖xc4 e4 19 ♘g5 with numerous threats.

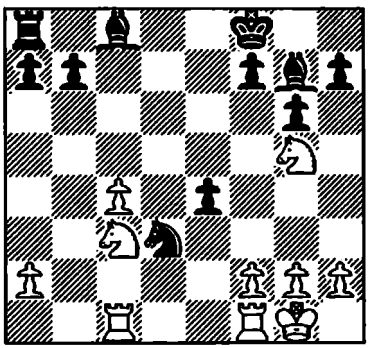


17 ♗xf8?!

According to Sanakoev, Black is also slightly worse after 17 bxc4 e4 18 ♗xf8 exf3 19 ♗xg7 fxg2 20 ♖g1 ♔xg7 21 ♖xg2, though admittedly he would have

good drawing chances because White's pawns are split. Now Black obtains excellent play for the exchange.

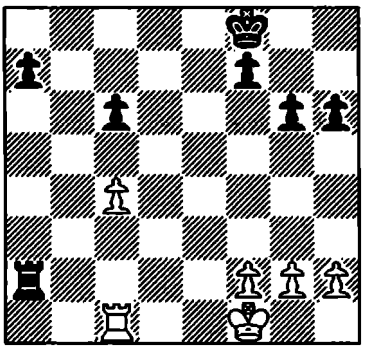
17...♔xf8 18 bxc4 ♘xc5 19 0-0 e4 20 ♘g5 ♘d3



21 ♘cxe4?

After 21 ♖c2 Black can repeat the position with 21...♘b4 22 ♖cc1 ♘d3, but this would have been White's best course. Inexplicably he gives back the exchange and then has to face the wrath of the two bishops.

21...♘xc1 22 ♖xc1 h6 23 ♘f3 ♗d7 24 ♘c5 ♗c6 25 ♘d2 ♖d8 26 ♘f1 ♖e8 27 ♘b3 ♖e2 28 ♘fd2 ♗d4! 29 ♘xd4 ♖xd2 30 ♘xc6 bxc6 31 ♔f1 ♖xa2



Winning a pawn and maintaining his rook in a dominating position on the seventh rank.

32 ♖b1 ♖a4 33 ♖b7 a5 34 ♖a7 ♖xc4 35 ♖xa5 ♖c2 36 ♖a7 ♔g7 37 h4 g5 38 hxg5 hxg5 39 g4 ♔f6 40 ♔e1 ♔e6 41 ♖c7 f6 42 ♖c8 ♖c5 43 ♔e2 ♔e5 44 ♔e3 ♖c3+ 45 ♔d2 ♖c4 46 ♔d3 ♖d4+ 47 ♔e3 ♖d6 48 f3 ♔d5 49 ♔d3 ♔c5+ 50 ♔c3 ♔d5 51 ♔d3 c5 52 ♔c3 ♖a6 53 ♖d8+ ♔e5 54 ♔c4 ♖a3 55 ♖d5+ ♔f4 56 ♖f5+ ♔g3 57 ♖xf6 ♖xf3 0-1

Summary

The Voronezh is a problem, a big one in fact. Right now I'd only recommend this line to White, though it is possible that Black may find a major improvement in the sharp lines arising from 9...f5 10 g3. He can probably get a solid enough game with 9...e6 (or even 9...♗d7) but he is unlikely to achieve full equality in these lines.

The most 'natural' move is 9...e5, but defending against the initiative White obtains is probably a rather thankless task. It could be that someone like Baburin will eventually show how Black can draw; until that happens I'd prefer to recapture with the e-pawn on move 5.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗e3 *(D)*

7 h3 – *Game 30*

7...♗g7 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 b3 e5

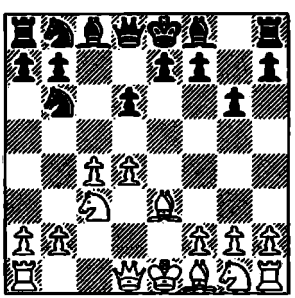
9...♗f5 – *Game 32*

9...♘c6 *(D)* – *Game 31*

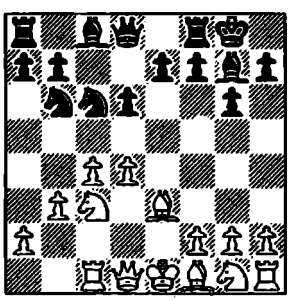
10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♕xd8

11 c5 – *Game 33*

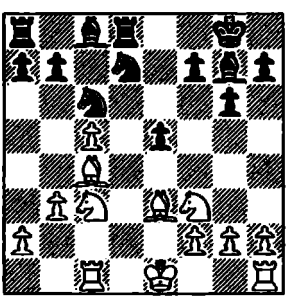
11...♖xd8 12 c5 ♘6d7 13 ♗c4 ♘c6 14 ♘f3 *(D)* – *Game 34*



7 ♗e3

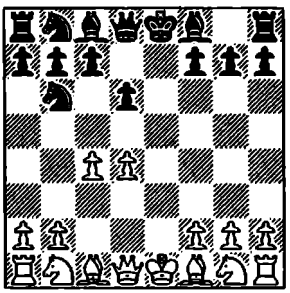


9...♘c6



14 ♘f3

CHAPTER SIX



Exchange Variation with 5...exd6

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 exd6

The simple 5...exd6 has always been known as a solid line for Black, but the rise of the Voronezh Variation (Chapter 5) has thrown it into the limelight. The symmetry of the pawn structure is maintained with White claiming a space advantage and a badly placed knight on b6. On the other hand it can be argued that White has slightly weakened his d-pawn. The pawn on c4 cannot move back to c3!

White has a wide choice of different piece formations and move orders that make an understanding of plans and ideas more important than a slide-rule knowledge of exact variations. Black's traditional method of counterplay has been to play ...♗e7, castle short, develop his b8 knight and c8 bishop (the latter to either f5 or g4) and then play ...d6-d5. When White meets this with c4-c5, the knight on b6 is recycled to f5 via c8 and e7. Pressure against d4!

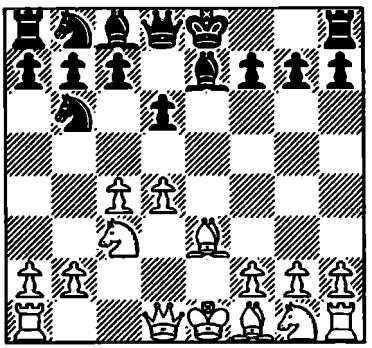
Of course White does not sit still whilst these manoeuvres are being carried out. A plan that often crops up is a kingside pawn advance, usually with h2-h3 and g2-g4, often after White has castled kingside! The idea is to deprive Black's pieces of good squares.

Game 35 shows a very standard treatment for both sides, though in this particular game White used a slight twist in that he delayed kingside castling. In Game 36 Black also used some subtlety in that he developed his queen's bishop to f5 rather than g4. Here the idea is that h2-h3 by White does not gain a tempo.

Game 37 features an aggressive new try by White – an early ♕f3 followed by castling long. Games 38 and 39 show a more mature treatment with ♗d3 followed by ♘ge2.

Game 35
Velicka-Freisler
Czech Ch., Zlin 1997

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 exd6 6 ♘c3 ♗e7 7 ♗e3!?



This is actually quite a subtle move order. White intends to delay castling so that a later ...♗g4 by Black can be met by h2-h3 and g2-g4 without worrying about weakening the king's defences.

After the standard 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 ♗e2 ♗g4 (8...♗f5 9 0-0 transposes into the next game, Yagupov-Balashov) 9 0-0 Black can consider the flexible 9...c6!? (9...♘c6 10 ♗e3 ♗f6 11 b3 d5 transposes into the note to White's 11th move) 10 b3 ♖e8, when Mortensen-Agdestein, Reykjavik Zonal 1995 continued 11 h3 ♗h5 12 ♗f4 a5 13 ♖e1 ♘a6 14 ♗f1 ♘c7 15 ♖c1 ♘e6 16 ♗e3 d5 17 c5 ♘d7 with a complex struggle – Black can put pressure on d4 and break up White's queenside pawns with ...b7-b6.

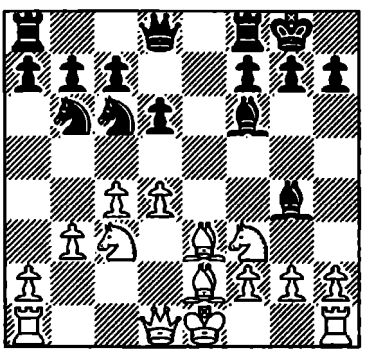
7 h3 is an attempt to prevent ...♗g4 altogether, though this gives Black time to adopt an alternative plan based on ...c7-c5. V Atlas-Löffler, Austrian Ch. 2000 went 7...0-0 8 ♘f3 c5!? (8...♗f5, seems very reasonable here, with similar play to Game 36, Yagupov-Balashov) 9 d5 ♗f6 10 ♗e2 ♖e8 (the immediate 10...♗xc3+ also looks interesting) 11 0-0 ♘8d7 and now White should probably have played 12 ♗d2! to avoid doubled pawns and maintain a slight space advantage. In the game he played 12 ♗e3, with unclear complications resulting from 12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♘e5 (13...♘f8!? looks like a good move to me) 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 15 a4 ♕h4.

7...0-0 8 ♘f3 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 ♘c6

Once again it's worth considering Agdestein's flexible 9...c6!? approach.

10 b3 ♗f6

Black can also first play 10...♖e8, when Djurhuus-Tisdall, Eikrem Memorial, Gausdal 1996 continued 11 ♕d2 ♗f6 12 0-0 d5 13 c5 ♘c8 14 h3 ♗e6 (14...♗f5!?) 15 b4 a6 16 b5! axb5 17 ♘xb5 ♘a5 18 ♗f4 ♖e7 19 ♖fe1 b6 20 ♖ac1 c6 21 ♘d6 ♘xd6 22 ♗xd6 ♖b7 23 ♘e5 bxc5 24 ♗xc5 ♗g5 25 f4 with a definite edge to White.

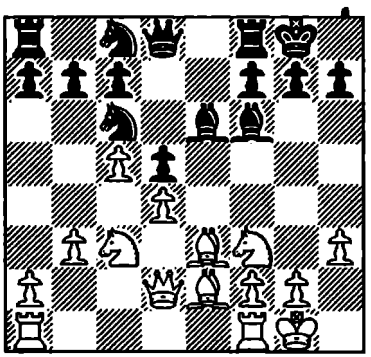


11 h3!?

Giving the game an independent flavour compared with the standard plan of castling short.

After 11 0-0 d5 12 c5 ♘c8 13 h3 (13 b4?! is dubious because of 13...♘8e7 14 b5 ♘a5 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 c6 17 ♕d3 ♘c4 when Black's pieces find excellent squares and the d-pawn comes under pressure, Gipslis-Larsen, Sousse Interzonal 1967) 13...♗e6 (more or less

the only move for Black as 13...♗xf3 is met by 14 ♗xf3 ♘8e7 15 g4 g6 16 ♖c1 and 13...♗f5 by 14 ♕d2 h6 15 ♖ad1 ♘8e7?! 16 g4 ♗h7 17 h4! ♘g6 18 g5 hxg5 19 hxg5 ♗e7 20 ♔g2, with the simple but highly effective plan of doubling on the h-file, Kurajica-Hort, Sombor 1968) 14 ♕d2



and now:

a) 14...h6 15 ♗d3 ♘8e7 16 g4 g5 17 ♘e2 ♗g7 18 ♘h2, intending f2-f4, gave White a strong attack in Armas-Graf, West Germany 1989.

b) 14...b6 15 ♘a4 ♗d7 16 ♖ac1 ♖e8 17 ♖fe1 ♘8e7 18 g4 h6 19 b4 ♘g6 20 a3 ♘xd4 21 ♘xd4 ♗xa4 22 b5 put Black in serious trouble in the game Brynell-Baburin, Copenhagen 2000.

c) Black is doing okay after the flexible 14...♘8e7. Mortensen-Kengis, Moscow Olympiad 1994 continued 15 g4 g6! 16 ♘e1 (after 16 b4 it looks quite interesting to play 16...♘xb4 17 ♖ab1 ♘bc6 18 ♖xb7 ♘a5 19 ♖bb1 ♘c4 20 ♗xc4 dxc4 with the idea of ...h7-h5 in the air) 16...♗g7 17 ♘g2 b6 18 cxb6 cxb6 19 ♘f4 ♕d6 20 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 21 ♖fd1 ♘b8 22 ♘b5 ♕d7 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 25 ♕xc1 ♘bc6 26 ♕d2 ½-½.

d) The other interesting move for Black in this position is 14...g6.

White doesn't have much here which explains Velicka's attempt to introduce a finesse based on delayed castling.

11...♗e6

And not 11...♗h5 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♕d2 d5 14 c5 ♘c8 15 ♖ad1, transposing into Kurajica-Hort above.

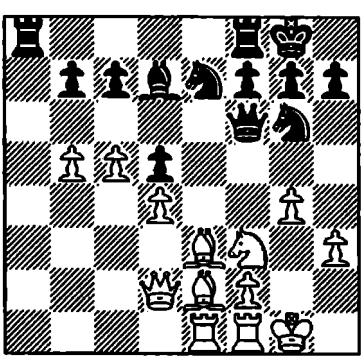
12 ♘e4!?

12 0-0 d5 13 c5 ♘c8 would transpose into Mortensen-Kengis above, which was very reasonable for Black.

12...d5 13 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 14 c5 ♘c8 15 ♕d2 ♗f5

Compared to the positions arising from 11 0-0, White has exchanged his knight for Black's dark-squared bishop. Probably this is in White's favour, for although Black's position has been slightly freed he will find it difficult to put effective pressure against the d4-pawn.

16 b4 a6 17 0-0 ♘8e7 18 a4 ♘g6 19 b5 axb5 20 axb5 ♘ce7 21 g4!? ♗d7 22 ♖ae1



It now looks as if White is better; he has more space and Black's pieces are awkwardly bunched on the kingside. The downside is that his king is fairly

exposed, which certainly presents Black with practical chances. The following moves look as if they were played under pressure from the clock.

22...h6 23 ♘e5!? ♘xe5 24 dxe5 ♕h4 25 ♔g2 c6 26 f4 ♘g6 27 ♗d4 ♖a3 28 ♖f3??

A blunder which should have lost immediately. Finkel suggested 28 ♗c3 cxb5 29 ♖a1 ♖fa8 30 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 31 f5 ♘e7 32 ♕b2 with a complicated struggle.

28...♖fa8??

Missing an immediate win with 28...♖xf3 29 ♗xf3 ♘xf4+! etc.

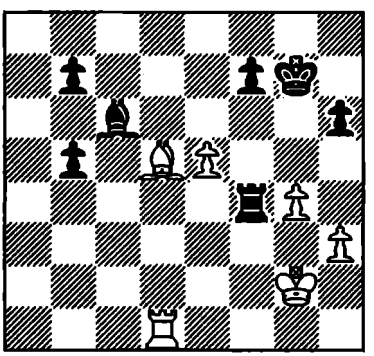
29 ♗f2 ♖xf3!? 30 ♗xf3

And not 30 ♗xh4?! ♘xh4+ 31 ♔g1 ♖aa3 32 bxc6 ♗xc6 33 ♖d1 ♖xh3 with a ferocious attack.

30...♕e7 31 ♕d4?! cxb5 32 ♗g3 ♖a4 33 ♕d2 ♕xc5

Suddenly Black is material up whilst White's kingside advance is no further forward.

34 f5 ♘f8 35 f6 ♘g6 36 fxg7 ♔xg7 37 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 38 ♗xd5 ♗c6 39 ♖d1 ♘f4+ 40 ♗xf4 ♖xf4



The endgame offers Black excellent winning chances, though there are some practical difficulties.

41 ♔g3 ♖a4 42 h4 b4 43 e6 fxe6 44 ♗xe6 ♔f6 45 ♗f5 ♖a3+ 46 ♔f2 ♔e5 47 ♖b1 ♖f3+ 48 ♔e2 b3 49 ♔d2 ♗d5 50 ♖d1 ♖h3 51 h5 ♗f3 52 ♖b1 ♗d5 53 ♖d1 ♖h1 54 ♖xh1 ♗xh1 55 ♔e3 ♗d5 56 ♗b1 ♗c4 57 g5 hxg5 58 h6 ♔f6 59 h7 ♔g7 60 ♔d4 ♗e2 0-1

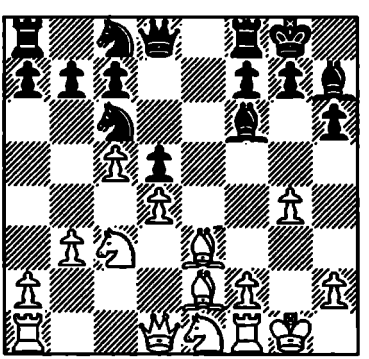
After 60...♗e2 61 ♔c3 ♗d1 62 ♗e4 ♗c2 63 ♗xb7 ♔xh7 Black will win the bishop with his g-pawn and then promote the b-pawn.

Game 36
Yagupov-Balashov
Moscow 1996

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 exd6 6 ♘f3 ♗e7 7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 ♗f5!?

This is often the reaction to an early h2-h3 by White, but in any case it seems like a very sensible alternative to the development of the bishop on g4. If White chooses the typical plan of a kingside pawn advance (h2-h3, g2-g4 etc.), it saves a tempo for Black.

9 ♘c3 ♗f6 10 ♗e3 ♘c6 11 b3 d5 12 c5 ♘c8 13 ♘e1 h6 14 g4 ♗h7



Compared to the Kurajica-Hort

game, given in the notes to Game 35, Black has an extra tempo through having played ...♗f5-h7 rather than ...♗g4-f5-h7. This certainly improves his prospects because his counterplay kicks in a move earlier.

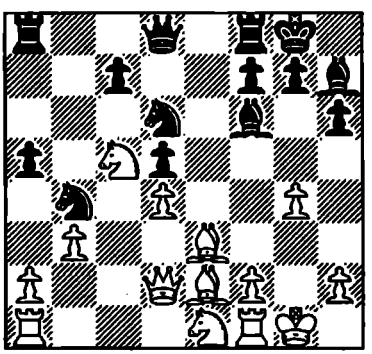
15 ♘g2 b6 16 ♘a4

Ganging up on Black's d-pawn fails to produce the desired effect: 16 cxb6 axb6 17 ♘f4 ♘8e7 18 ♗f3 ♘b4 threatens 19...♘c2.

16...♘b4 17 ♘e1

Preventing 17...♘c2.

17...bxc5 18 ♘xc5 ♘d6 19 ♕d2 a5



20 a3?!

This creates more weaknesses on the queenside, notably the b3-square. According to Chekhov, White could consolidate his position with 20 f3 (preventing ...♘e4 by Black) 20...♖e8 21 ♖c1 ♕e7 22 ♘g2, when both sides have chances in a complex game.

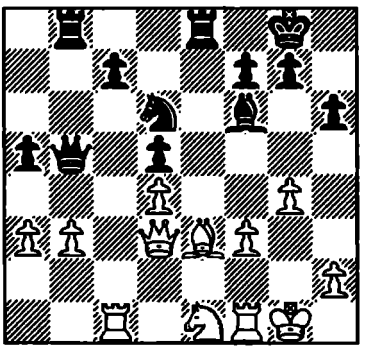
20...♘c6 21 ♖c1 ♖e8 22 ♘b7?!

It's too late for 22 f3 because of 22...♖xe3!.

22...♘xb7 23 ♖xc6 ♘d6 24 f3

And not 24 ♗d3?! because of 24...♗xd3 25 ♘xd3 ♕d7, forking c6 and g4.

24...♖b8 25 ♗d3 ♗xd3 26 ♕xd3 ♕d7 27 ♖c1 ♕b5



Winning a pawn.

28 ♕xb5

After 28 ♖c3 there is 28...♕xd3 29 ♖xd3 ♖xe3! 30 ♖xe3 ♗xd4 etc.

28...♘xb5 29 ♗f2

Or 29 ♘c2 ♘c3, threatening ...♘e2+ and ...♖xb3.

29...♘xd4 30 ♖xc7 ♖xb3 31 ♖c5 ♖xa3 32 ♖xd5 ♘e2+ 33 ♔h1 ♖a1 34 ♖d6 ♗c3 35 ♖c6 ♗b4 36 ♖c4 g5 37 ♖e4 ♖xe4 38 fxe4 ♘f4 39 ♗g3 0-1

After 39...♘d3 Black wins a piece.

Game 37
H.Hagesaether-Wohl
Ubeda 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 exd6 6 ♕f3?!

A very sharp plan introduced by Victor Korchnoi; White aims for queenside castling and an all-out onslaught against Black's king.

6...♘c6

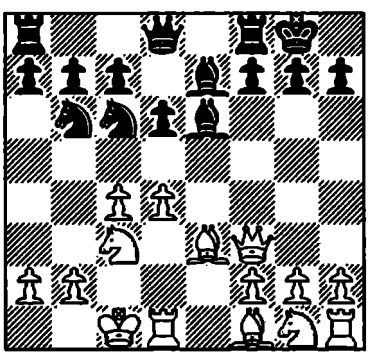
An alternative treatment is 6...♗e7 7 ♘c3 and now:

a) The odd-looking 7...♕d7?! was tried in Saltaev-Marinkovic, Ikaria 1994

but after 8 ♗e3 ♘a4?! (8...♕g4 is stronger, but slightly better for White after 9 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 10 h3) 9 ♘d5 0-0 10 b3 ♘b6 11 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 12 ♗d3 White had a clear edge because of his useful bishop pair.

b) 7...0-0 8 ♗e3 c6 9 0-0-0 (9 ♗d3 d5 10 c5 ♘c4 11 ♗c1 b6 gave Black excellent counterplay in Grosar-Raspor, Portoroz 1996) 9...d5 10 c5 ♘6d7 11 ♗d3 (or 11 g4 b6 12 cxb6 axb6 13 ♗d3 b5 14 a3 ♘a6 with a strong queenside initiative, Lakos-Zhukova, Women's Olympiad, Yerevan 1996) 11...b6 12 h4 ♘f6 13 ♘ge2 (Camacho-diaz Perez, Pinar del Rio 1995), and now 13...bxc5 14 dxc5 ♘bd7 would have given Black a good game.

7 ♗e3 ♗e7 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 0-0-0 ♗e6



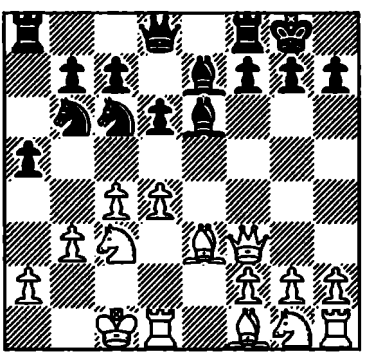
10 b3

A logical and possibly superior alternative is the move 10 d5, after which 10...♘e5 11 ♕e4 ♗g4 12 f3 f5 13 ♕f4 ♘g6 14 ♕d4 f4 15 ♗f2 ♗f6 16 ♕d2 ♗f5 17 g4 fxg3 18 hxg3 was slightly better for White but agreed drawn in the game Donev-Zlochevsky, German Bundesliga 1996.

After the sharp 10 c5!? Black should probably react with the risky looking 10...♘c4!? (not many grandmasters would play such a loose-looking move, but the passive 10...♘c8?! gave White the better game after 11 ♗d3 d5 12 ♘ge2 ♗g5 13 h4 ♗xe3+ 14 fxe3 ♕d7 15 h5 in Osadchenko-Donchenko, Moscow 1996), after which 11 ♗f4 (11 d5 ♘6e5!) 11...♕c8 12 ♕g3 ♘6a5 13 b3 ♘a3 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 ♔b2 b5 gave Black an attack in Buenermann-Waechtler, German Bundesliga 1994.

10...a5

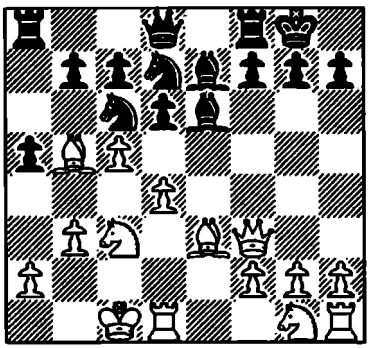
Black can also interpose 10...♕c8 11 h3 before playing 11...a5, at which point Seul-J Horvath, Budapest 1995 was rather unhelpfully agreed drawn.



11 c5

Deciding to punch, rather than duck. Alternatively White can try to blockade the queenside with 11 a4, when 11...d5 (or 11...♕c8 12 ♗e2 ♘b4 13 ♘h3 d5 14 c5 ♘d7 15 ♘f4 ♘f6 which also led to complex play in Gadjilu-Miles, Linares 1998) 12 c5 ♘c8 13 ♘h3 (13 ♘ge2 ♘b4 14 ♘f4 would transpose) 13...♘b4 14 ♘f4 ♕d7 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♕h3 ♗f6 17 ♗b5 c6 18 ♗e2 ♘e7 19 g4 e5 was good for Black in Mas-Wohl, Sydney 1999.

11...♘d7 12 ♗b5?

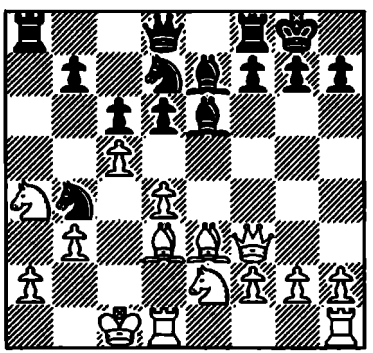


A poor move which helps Black accelerate his play on the queenside. White should play 12 d5 ♘ce5 13 ♕e2 ♗f5 14 h3, intending g2-g4, with chances for both sides in a highly complex and tactical position.

12...♘b4 13 ♘ge2

13 ♕xb7? ♖b8 would be even worse.

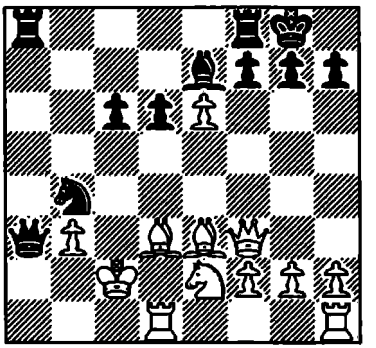
13...c6 14 ♗d3 a4! 15 ♘xa4



15...b5!?

Attempting to decide the game with an immediate attack. A simpler way to play the position was with the continuation 15...♘xa2+ 16 ♔b2 ♘b4, recovering the pawn with White's king still vulnerable.

16 cxb6 ♘xa2+ 17 ♔b2 ♘xb6 18 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 19 d5! ♕a5 20 dxe6 ♕a3+ 21 ♔c2 ♘b4+



22 ♔d2!

Trying to escape via e1.

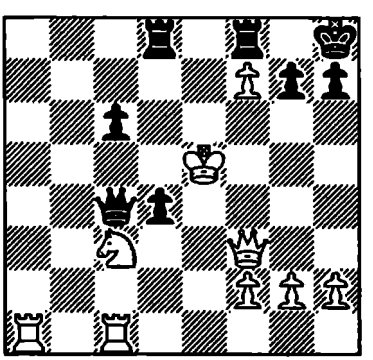
22...♘xd3 23 ♔xd3 ♕xb3+ 24 ♘c3

If 24 ♔d2 there follows 24...♕b4+ 25 ♘c3 d5!, threatening ...d5-d4.

24...♗f6 25 exf7+ ♔h8 26 ♗d4?

Having defended himself very accurately White finally goes astray. He should return the piece with 26 ♕xc6!, after which 26...♖ac8 27 ♕d5 ♖xc3+ 28 ♔e2 ♖c2+ 29 ♔f1 sees his king finally escape. A draw would be likely after 29...♕xd5 30 ♖xd5 ♖xf7 etc.

26...♗xd4 27 ♔xd4 d5! 28 ♖a1 ♕c4+ 29 ♔e5 ♖ad8! 30 ♖hc1 d4



31 ♘a4

Or 31 ♘e2 ♕b4 32 ♕xc6 ♖xf7, once

again leaving White's king hopelessly placed.

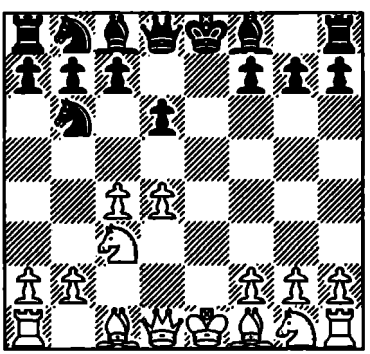
31...♕b4 32 ♘c5 d3 33 ♕e4 ♕b2+ 34 ♔f4 ♕xf2+ 35 ♔g5

Or 35 ♔g4 ♖d4, winning the queen.

35...h6+ 36 ♔h5 ♖d5+ 37 ♔g4 ♖g5+ 38 ♔h3 ♖h5+ 39 ♔g4 ♖h4 mate (0-1)

Game 38
Davies-Sinha
Calcutta 1990

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 exd6 6 ♘c3



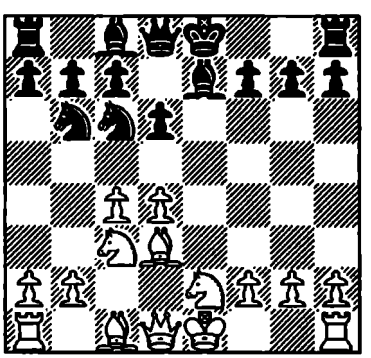
6...♗e7

Black can also try 6...♘c6!? in an attempt to prevent White from adopting the ♗d3 plan. The drawback is that the knight can be driven away immediately, though the immediate attempt at refutation seems to fall short:

a) A game between Ara and Artashas Minasian, Armenian Ch., Yerevan 1999 continued 7 d5!? ♘e5 8 f4 ♘ed7 (and not 8...♘exc4? 9 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 10 ♕a4+) 9 ♕d4 ♗e7! 10 ♕xg7 ♗f6 11 ♕g4 (11 ♕h6 ♕e7+ 12 ♔d1 ♘c5 gives Black very strong play for the pawn because of the offside position of White's queen; 11 ♕g3? is a blunder because of 11...♗h4) 11...♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♕f6 13 ♗d2 ♘c5 14 ♕g5 ♕xg5 15 fxg5 ♗f5 with more than enough for the sacrificed pawn because of the weakness of c4.

b) White is probably well advised to delay this advance. Emms-Baburin, Port Erin 1997 continued 7 ♘f3 ♗g4 (7...♗e7 8 d5!? ♘e5 9 ♘xe5 dxe5 10 ♗e2 0-0 11 0-0 f5 was okay for Black in Palliser-Miles, British Ch., Scarborough 2001) 8 ♗e2 ♗e7 (8...♗xf3 9 ♗xf3 ♘xc4? 10 ♕e2+! ♕e7 11 ♘d5 ♕xe2+ 12 ♗xe2 is strong for White) 9 d5! ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 ♘e5 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 b3 ♗f6 13 ♗b2 with the better game for White.

7 ♗d3 ♘c6 8 ♘ge2



8...♗g4

For the sensible 8...0-0 see the next game (Sermek-Zelcic).

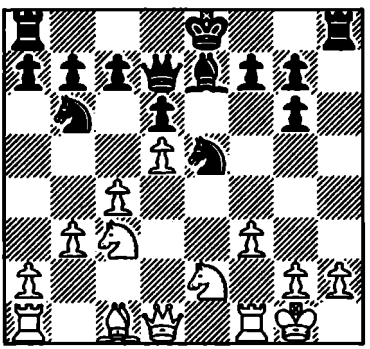
9 f3 ♗h5

Or 9...♗h4+ 10 ♘g3 ♗h5 11 0-0 ♗xg3 12 hxg3 0-0 (12...♗g6 13 ♖e1+ ♔f8 14 b3 ♕f6 15 ♗e3 ♖e8 16 ♕d2 ♗xd3 17 ♕xd3 ♕g6 18 ♕d2 ♕xg3 19 c5 ♘d7 20 ♗f4 ♕g6 21 ♘b5 gave White a winning attack in Boleslavsky-Kopylov, USSR Ch. 1949 and

12...♘xd4? loses a piece after 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♗xg6 etc.) 13 b3 ♖e8 14 g4 ♗g6 15 ♗xg6 hxg6 16 d5 and White had a nice space advantage in Panov-Mikenas, Moscow 1942.

10 0-0 ♗g6 11 ♗xg6 hxg6 12 d5 ♘e5 13 b3 ♕d7?!

Unrealistically hoping for some play on the kingside. 13...0-0 was better, intending ...♖e8 and ...♗f6.



14 ♗e3 ♕f5 15 ♘d4 ♕h5 16 h3

End of 'attack'. Now White's well placed pieces and space advantage start to tell.

16...♕h4 17 ♖e1 a6 18 f4 ♘ed7 19 ♘f3 ♕h5 20 ♗d4 ♘f6 21 ♗xb6 cxb6 22 ♕e2 ♘g8

This is not a good sign for Black.

23 ♕e3 0-0-0 24 ♕xb6 ♗f6 25 ♘e4! ♗e7

After 25...♗xa1 White mates with 26 ♘xd6+ ♖xd6 27 ♖e8+ ♔d7 28 ♕d8.

26 ♘d4 ♘f6 27 ♘c6! 1-0

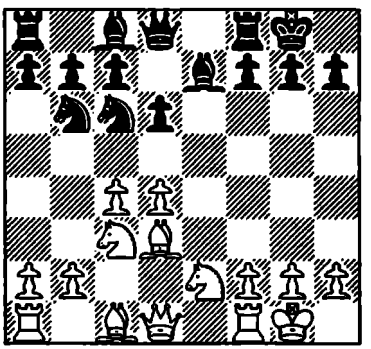
27...bxc6 28 dxc6 wins easily.

Game 39
Sermek-Zelcic
Croatian Team Ch., Makarska 1994

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 exd6 6 ♘c3 ♗e7 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 ♘ge2 ♘c6

Another possibility for Black is 8...c6, meeting 9 ♕c2 h6 10 0-0 with 10...d5 11 c5 ♘6d7, followed by ...b7-b6. It looks like a solid way to play the position and may not leave Black suffering from the same lack of space as the lines in which White kicks the knight on c6 with d4-d5.

9 0-0



9...♗f6

The most popular move which applies pressure to the d4-pawn. There are several alternatives:

a) 9...♘b4 sets out to 'win' the bishop pair, but White can simply retreat it with 10 ♗b1 (it turns out that 10...♘xc4? loses to 11 a3 ♘c6 12 ♕d3). Kaminski-Baburin, Biel 1995 continued 10...a5!? 11 b3 ♖e8 12 ♗e3 a4!? 13 ♘xa4 ♘xa4 14 bxa4 ♘c6 15 ♘c3 ♘a5 16 ♗d3 c6 17 ♕c2 g6 18 h3 d5 19 cxd5 cxd5 20 ♖ab1 and White was better because of his pressure against the d5 and b7 points.

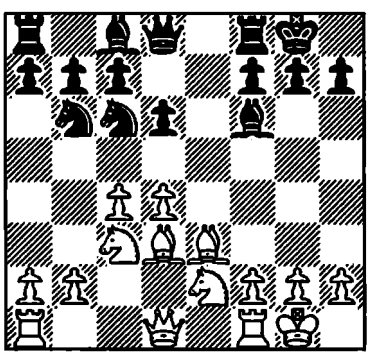
b) 9...♖e8 is a good, flexible move that has only been seen in one game that I know of. Atkinson-Fogarasi, Groningen 1989 continued 10 a3?! ♗f6

11 ♗e3 g6 12 ♕c2 ♘e7 13 ♘g3 d5 14 c5 ♘d7 15 b4 ♘f8 16 b5 h5 17 ♘ge2 ♘f5 with an excellent game.

c) 9...♗g4 is similar to the 8...♗g4 from Davies-Sinha. White gets more space after 10 f3 ♗h5 11 ♘f4 ♗g6 12 ♗xg6 (12 ♘xg6 hxg6 13 d5 ♘e5 14 b3 ♗f6 15 ♗b2 a5 gave Black counterplay in Ilfeld-Zilberman, Israeli Ch., Tel Aviv 1994) 12...hxg6 13 d5 ♘e5 14 b3, Djuric-Miles, Aegina 1993, and now Zilberman's plan of 14...♗f6 (Miles played 14...♕d7?! which takes d7 away from his knight on b6) 15 ♗b2 a5 looks reasonable.

d) 9...f5 is a double-edged way of gaining space on the kingside. Malashenko-Cistiakova, Decin 1998 continued 10 ♗e3 (10 b3 looks stronger) 10...♔h8 11 f3 ♘b4 12 a3 ♘xd3 13 ♕xd3 d5 14 c5 ♘c4 with counterplay.

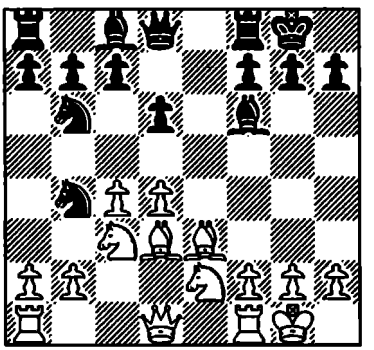
10 ♗e3



10...♘b4

On this occasion Black succeeds in obtaining the bishop pair as after 11 ♗b1 ♘xc4 12 a3 he can capture the bishop on e3.

10...♗g4 is still possible but led to a plus for White after 11 h3 ♗h5 12 ♕d2 ♗g6 13 b3 ♗xd3 14 ♕xd3 d5 15 c5 ♘c8 16 b4 ♘xb4 17 ♕b1 ♘c6 18 ♕xb7 ♘8e7 19 ♖ab1, Sermek-Zelcic, Pozega 2000.

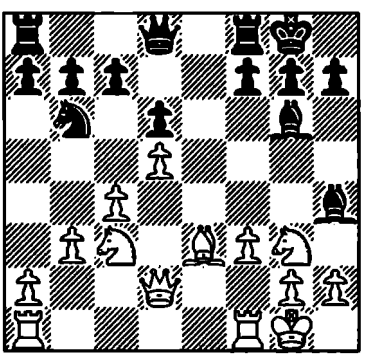


11 b3

Emms's suggestion of 11 ♘g3 is worth considering.

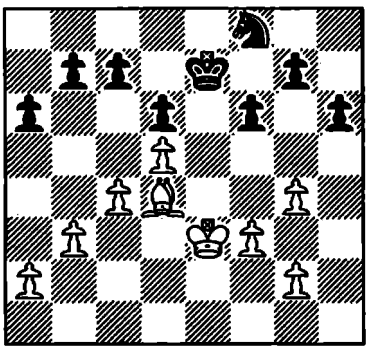
11...♘xd3 12 ♕xd3 ♗g4 13 f3 ♗h5 14 ♘g3 ♗g6 15 ♕d2 ♗h4 16 d5

Taking the familiar space advantage, which pretty much guarantees that White will be better. The big question is whether or not he will be able to make further progress. Black's position is cramped but sound.



16...♖e8 17 ♖ae1 ♘d7 18 ♖e2 ♗xg3 19 hxg3 a6 20 ♖fe1 ♘f8 21 ♗d4 ♕d7 22 ♘e4 ♗xe4 23 ♖xe4

♖xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♖e8 25 ♕e3 ♖xe4 26 ♕xe4 f6 27 ♔f2 ♔f7 28 g4 h6 29 ♔e3 ♕e7 30 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7



White is still slightly better, having kept both his space edge and bishop versus knight. But it's not enough to win.

31 ♔e4 a5 32 c5 ♘g6 33 cxd6+ ♔xd6 34 ♗f2 ♘e7 35 ♗g3+ ♔d7 36 ♔d4 c6 37 dxc6+ ♔xc6 38 ♗e1 b6 39 ♗d2 ♔b5 40 ♗f4 ♔c6 41 a4 ♘g6 42 ♗g3 ♘f8 43 ♔e4 ♘e6 44 ♔f5 ♘d4+ 45 ♔g6 ♘xb3 46 ♔xg7 ♘c5 47 ♔xh6 ♘xa4 48 ♔g6 ♘c5 49 ♔xf6 a4 50 ♗e1 ♘d3 51 ♗c3 b5 52 g5 b4 53 g6 bxc3 54 g7 c2 55 g8♕ c1♕ 56 ♕e8+ ♔c7 57 ♕xa4 ♕h6+ 58 ♔f5 ♕h5+ 59 ♔f6 ½-½

Summary

Black must know what he's doing in these lines in order to avoid the kind of thing that happened in Kurajica-Hort, given in the notes to Game 35. Having said that, he can obtain excellent counterplay if he plays the position precisely. Yagupov-Balashov is certainly worth studying, as is Mortensen-Kengis, given in the notes to Game 35. I also like Agdestein's flexible ...c7-c6 treatment, also given in the notes to Game 35.

One of the best ways to play it with White is with ♗d3 and ♘ge2, which certainly calls for accurate play on Black's part if he wants to avoid falling into a passive position. In this case I like Fogarasi's play against Atkinson in the note within Game 39. Black avoided any fruitless development of his queen's bishop, instead concentrating on the reorganisation of his kingside.

The Exchange Variation is one of the two lines I'd recommend for White against the Alekhine, the other being the Classical. Against 5...exd6 I suggest the ♗d3 and ♘ge2 set-up.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 exd6 exd6 6 ♘c3 *(D)*

6 ♕f3 – *Game 37*

6 ♘f3 ♗e7 7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 ♗f5 9 ♘c3 ♗f6 10 ♗e3 ♘c6 – *Game 36*

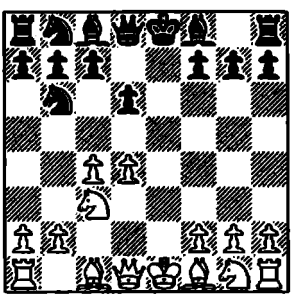
6...♗e7 7 ♗d3

7 ♗e3 0-0 8 ♘f3 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 ♘c6 10 b3 ♗f6 11 h3 – *Game 35*

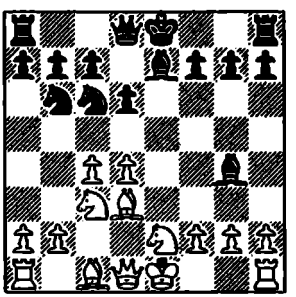
7...0-0

7...♘c6 8 ♘ge2 ♗g4 *(D)* – *Game 38*

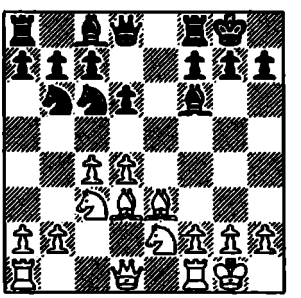
8 ♘ge2 ♘c6 9 0-0 ♗f6 10 ♗e3 *(D)* – *Game 39*



6 ♘c3

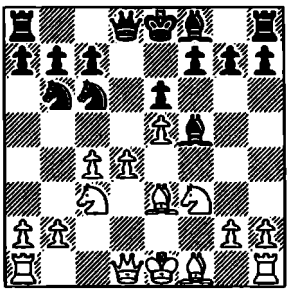


8...♗g4



10 ♗e3

CHAPTER SEVEN



Four Pawns Attack: Main Line

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 e6 9 ♘f3

The Four Pawns Attack is White's sharpest line against the Alekhine and represents an attempt at outright refutation. The reason that it is not at the front of the book is more a question of popularity; in practice it is far more likely that Black will meet either 4 ♘f3 or the Exchange Variation.

White has taken as much space as he possibly can, sending four of his pawns forward with gain of tempo. The problem with this massive expansion is that pawns are unable to move back. If the centre collapses White's entire position may implode.

Black's traditional method of combating the Four Pawns Attack is to develop his pieces before attempting to undermine White's pawn structure. Both sides get the opportunity to develop their pieces before commencing battle which is how people played before they broke all the rules!

The critical position comes after White's ninth move; Black must decide how he intends to tackle the centre. With 9...♗e7 he intends to castle and play ...f7-f6 (Game 40), but he must also take account of the fact that White can play 10 d5 (Games 41 and 42).

One line that has been quite popular of late is 9...♗g4 (Game 43), which immediately puts pressure on d4 by threatening to eliminate the knight on f3. Existing theory applauds the idea, but remain unconvinced after 10 ♗e2. Does Black get compensation for the two bishops?

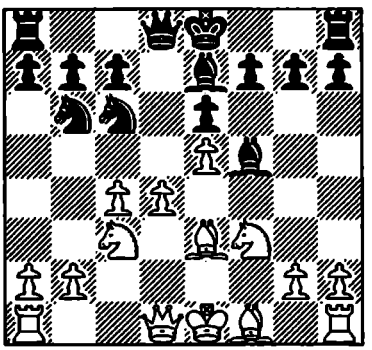
Games 44 and 45 deal with 9...♕d7 and 9...♗b4 respectively, neither of which have received much attention but both of which look playable.

Game 40
Yudasin-Kengis
Minsk 1985

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 e6 9 ♘f3 ♗e7

This natural developing move is

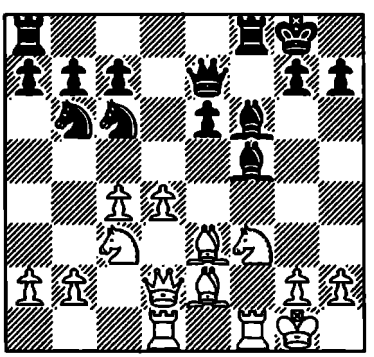
Black's most popular continuation, though it does require a good knowledge of theory after the sharp 10 d5.



10 ♗e2 0-0 11 0-0 f6! 12 exf6

After the sharp 12 ♘h4?! Black obtained excellent counterplay in Arakelov-Bagirov, Baku 1960: 12...fxe5 13 ♘xf5 exf5 14 d5 ♘d4! (offering a pawn to gain strong play on the dark squares; 14...♘b8 15 c5 is too passive) 15 ♗xd4 exd4 16 ♕xd4 ♘d7! 17 ♔h1 ♗c5 (17...♗d6 is not bad either) 18 ♕d3 ♕g5 19 ♘b5 ♖ae8! 20 ♘xc7 ♖e3 21 ♘e6 ♕h6 22 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 23 ♕c2 ♘e4 24 ♔g1 ♕b6 25 ♔h1 ♖f6 26 ♖f3 ♖xf3 27 ♗xf3 ♘g3+ 0-1.

12...♗xf6 13 ♕d2 ♕e7 14 ♖ad1



The position is in a state of dynamic equilibrium, with Black's weak pawn on e6 being compensated for by the weak pawn on d4. The more forceful 14 c5 led to equality after 14...♘d5 15 ♗f2 ♖ad8 16 ♖fe1 ♘db4 17 ♗c4 ♘c2 18 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 19 ♕xc2 ♘xd4 20 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 21 ♗xd4 ♖xd4, Garma-Alburt, New York 1993.

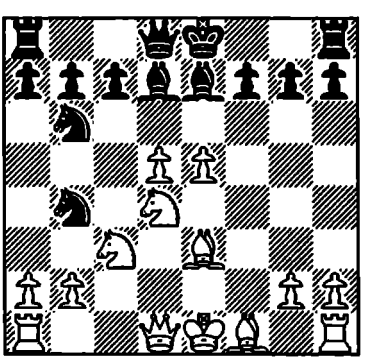
14...♖ad8 15 ♕c1 h6 16 h3 ♗h7 17 ♖fe1 ♔h8 18 ♗f1 ♕f7 19 ♔h1 ♘c8!

Improving the position of the poorly placed knight on b6.

20 ♗f2 ♘d6 21 a3 e5 22 c5 exd4 23 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 24 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 25 ♖xd4 ♘f5 26 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 27 ♕f4 ½-½

Game 41
Pegoraro-Henderson
Ischia 1996

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 e6 9 ♘f3 ♗e7 10 d5 exd5 11 cxd5 ♘b4 12 ♘d4 ♗d7



13 ♕f3

This is currently White's most popular choice. An alternative method of defending the d5-pawn is with 13 ♕b3.

Tsarev-Palatnik, Kiev 1989 continued 13...c5 14 dxc6 (14 ♘f3 c4 15 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 16 ♕xc4 ♘c2+ 17 ♔f2 ♘xa1 18 ♖xa1 is another possibility in which White has some compensation for the exchange) 14...bxc6 15 0-0-0 (after 15 ♖d1 ♕b8 16 e6 fxe6 17 ♘f3 a5 18 ♘e4 ♘6d5 Black had successfully consolidated in Polajzer-Kovacevic, Maribor 1980) 15...♕c7 16 ♗c4?! (16 e6 fxe6 17 ♘xe6 ♕e5 18 ♖xd7 is the critical line, according to Palatnik; I would need convincing about White's compensation – Black can anchor a knight on d5) 16...♘xc4 17 ♕xc4 ♕xe5 18 ♖he1 0-0 19 a3 ♘d5 20 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 21 ♘xd5 ♗xa3! 22 bxa3 (Or 22 ♘c3 ♖fc8) 22...♖fc8 23 ♗c5 ♗xd5 24 ♖xe5 ♗xc4 25 ♔b2 f6 0-1.

The immediate 13 e6 leads to wild complications after 13...fxe6 14 dxe6 ♗c6 15 ♕g4 ♗h4+ 16 g3 ♗xh1 (16...♗f6? 17 0-0-0 ♗xh1 18 ♘f5! is known to give White a winning attack) 17 0-0-0 (17 ♗b5+ c6 18 0-0-0 0-0 19 gxh4 h5! 20 ♕g3 cxb5 21 ♗g5 ♕b8 was okay for Black in Velimirovic-Kovacevic, Yugoslav Ch. 1984) 17...0-0 18 gxh4 ♕f6

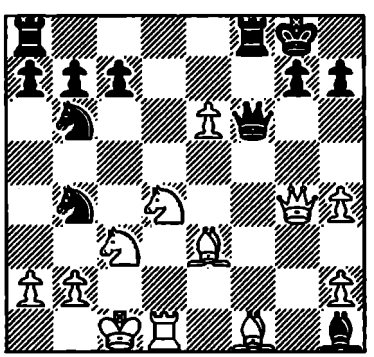
a) After 19 ♗e2 Black should probably play 19...♗d5 (if 19...c5 20 ♗g5 ♕e5 21 e7 cxd4 22 exf8♕+ ♖xf8 the move 23 ♕xd4 is now possible because White's bishop is no longer on b5; Black is unable to play 23...♘xa2+ because of 24 ♘xa2 ♕xe2 25 ♖xh1) 20 ♗g5 ♕e5 21 e7 ♖f2 (21...♖fe8 and 21...♖f7 are also possible) 22 a3 c5 23 axb4 cxd4 24 ♖xd4 h5!, which was at least equal for Black in Marjanovic-Cicovacki, Sombor 1978.

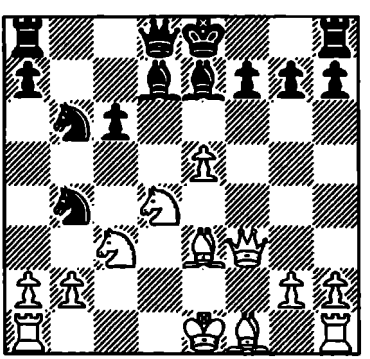
b) 19 ♗b5 c5 20 ♗g5 ♕e5 21 e7 cxd4 22 exf8♕+ ♖xf8 23 ♖xh1 (this time 23 ♕xd4 is met by 23...♘xa2+ 24 ♘xa2 ♕xb5 25 ♖xh1? ♕c6+) 23...dxc3 (this is Black's simplest option, though 23...h6 and; 23...a6 are also possible) 24 ♕xb4 cxb2+ and the exposed white king gave Black an easy game in Murey-Alburt, Beersheba 1980.

13...c5

13...0-0 14 a3 c5 15 axb4 cxd4 16 ♗xd4 ♗xb4 has been suggested by Alekhine guru Lev Alburt. Black evidently hopes that the pawns on e5 and d5 will be vulnerable but it remains to be seen how this is so after, say, 17 ♗d3.

14 dxc6 bxc6





and now:

14...♘xc6 is bad because of 15 e6 fxe6 16 ♗d3, with the threat of 17 ♕h5+, and 14...♗xc6 is better for White after 15 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 (15...bxc6!?) 16 ♗b5.

15 e6

Or:

a) 15 a3 c5! 16 axb4 cxd4 17 ♗xd4 0-0 is equal, according to Hartston.

b) 15 0-0-0 0-0 16 ♘f5 ♘6d5 17 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 18 ♘xd5 cxd5 19 a3 ♖fc8+ 20 ♔b1 ♘c2 21 ♗c1 ♖ab8 gave Black a winning attack in Trkaljanov-Kovacevic, Stip 1979.

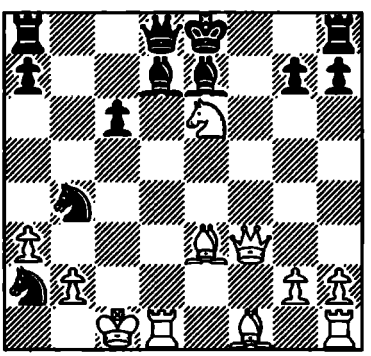
15...fxe6

15...♗xe6 16 a3 ♘4d5 17 ♘xc6 ♕c7 18 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♗b5+ is good for White.

16 0-0-0

16 a3 ♘4d5 17 ♗d3 ♘xe3 18 ♕xe3 0-0 19 ♕e4 g6 20 h4 e5 21 ♘f3 ♗f5 22 ♗c4+ ♔g7 23 ♕e2 ♘xc4 24 ♕xc4 ♕b6 25 0-0-0 ♖ab8 26 ♖d2 ♗xa3 was winning in Velimirovic-Kovacevic, Yugoslav Ch. 1979.

16...♘6d5 17 a3 ♘xc3 18 ♘xe6 ♘ca2+!



This recommendation of Bernard Cafferty is an important improvement over 18...♕a5 19 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 20 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 21 ♕g4+ ♔c7 22 axb4 ♘a2+ 23 ♔b1 ♘xb4 24 ♗c4, when White had a strong attack in Velimirovic-Kovacevic, Yugoslavia, 1978.

19 ♔b1 ♗xe6! 20 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21 axb4 ♘xb4

Black has only a rook, knight and pawn for the queen, but the main factor is that White's king is very exposed.

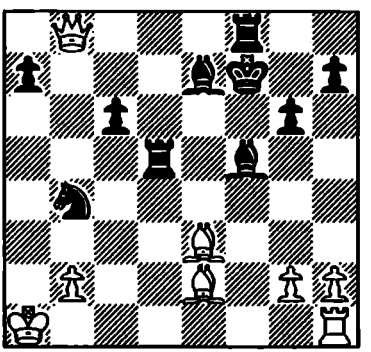
22 ♗e2

Black is also winning after either 22 ♕h5+ ♗f7 23 ♕g4 ♗g6+ 24 ♔a1 ♘c2+, or 22 ♕e4 ♖d1+ 23 ♗c1 ♗a2+.

22...♖f8 23 ♕h5+

Or 23 ♕g3 ♗f5+ 24 ♔a1 ♖d5!, again with a winning attack.

23...g6 24 ♕e5 ♗f5+ 25 ♔a1 ♖d5 26 ♕b8+ ♔f7 0-1



27 ♕xa7 ♘c2+ 28 ♔a2 ♘xe3 29 ♕xe3 ♖a5+ 30 ♔b3 ♖b8+ would be a massacre.

Game 42

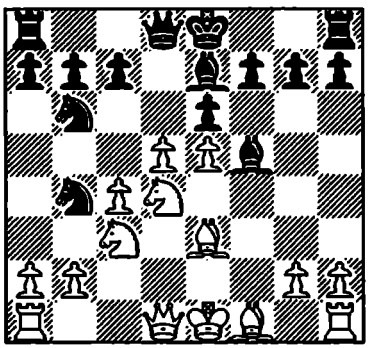
Paramonov-Bratchenko

Petroff Memorial, St Petersburg 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 e6 9 ♘f3 ♗e7 10 d5 ♘b4

I doubt that this will be played very much in future. White has two good lines.

11 ♘d4!?



This may be even better than the more traditional 11 ♖c1, though Black has some problems there too. Velimirovic-Marovic, Yugoslavia 1977 continued 11...exd5 (11...♗g4 12 a3 ♘a6 13 ♗e2 0-0 14 0-0 ♗c5 15 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 16 b4 ♘cd7 17 ♕d4 ♗xf3 18 ♗xf3 was also good for White in Vodicka-L.Smejkal, Czech Team Ch. 1997/98) 12 a3 c5 13 axb4 d4 14 ♗xd4 cxd4 15 ♘xd4 ♕b8 16 ♘xf5 ♕xe5+ 17 ♗e2 ♕xf5 18 c5 ♘d7 19 ♘d5 ♗d8 20 ♖c3 0-0 21 ♘e3 ♕e6 22 ♗g4 f5 23 ♗f3 with strong pressure.

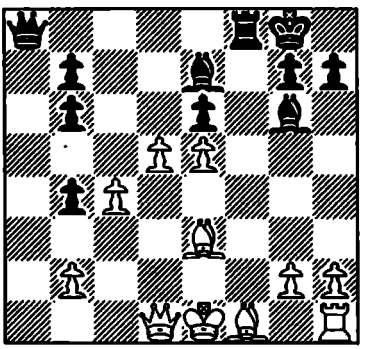
11...♗g6 12 a3 c5 13 ♘xe6!

The key move. 13 axb4 cxd4 14 ♕xd4 ♗xb4 15 dxe6 ♕xd4 16 ♗xd4 0-0 17 exf7+ ♗xf7 gave Black the initiative in Blazek-Kantorik, Slovakian Ch. 1995.

13...fxe6 14 axb4 cxb4 15 ♘a4 0-0

Gipslis once suggested 15...♘d7, but then 16 ♕d4 ♕a5 17 d6 ♗d8 18 c5 b5 19 b3! (19...bxa4? 20 ♖xa4) is good for White.

16 ♘xb6 axb6 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8



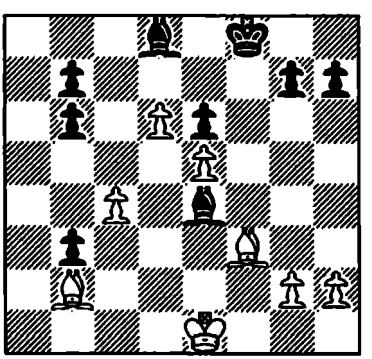
18 ♗e2

Or 18 d6 ♗d8 19 ♗e2 ♕a2 20 ♗d4 ♗e4 21 ♖f1 ♗xg2 22 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 23 ♗d3 ♗h4+ 24 ♔d2 as in Buchnicek-Krajnak, Stary Smokovec 1996. With White having a supported passed pawn on d6, Black will be struggling to hang on in these endgames.

18...♕a2 19 ♖f1?

A serious mistake; for reasons known best to himself, White suddenly presents his opponent with his own passed b-pawn. White should play 19 d6 ♗d8 20 ♗d4 as in the Buchnicek-Krajnak game above.

19...♕xb2 20 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 21 d6 ♗d8 22 ♗d4 ♕a2 23 ♕a1 b3 24 ♕b2 ♕xb2 25 ♗xb2 ♗e4 26 ♗f3?



Exchanging light squared bishops is a further mistake; Black's king can come marching in on the squares it used to protect. 26 g3 was the right move, when White should be able to draw.

26...♗xf3 27 gxf3 ♔f7 28 ♔d2?!

This makes it easy for Black. White had to stop Black's king from coming in on the kingside, and for that reason 28 ♔f2 would have been better.

28...♔g6 29 ♔c3 ♔f5 30 ♔xb3 ♔f4 31 ♔b4 ♔xf3 32 c5 ♔e4 33 ♔b5 ♔d5

33...bxc5 34 ♔xc5 g5 35 d7 g4 36 ♔d6 ♔f5, followed by a march of the kingside pawns, is also winning.

34 cxb6 g5 35 ♗c1 h5 36 ♗d2 g4 37 ♗e1 h4 38 ♗f2 ♔xe5 39 ♔c5 ♔e4 40 d7 ♔f3 41 ♗d4 g3 42 hxg3 h3 43 ♗e5 h2 44 ♗c7 h1♕ 45 ♗xd8 ♕d1 0-1

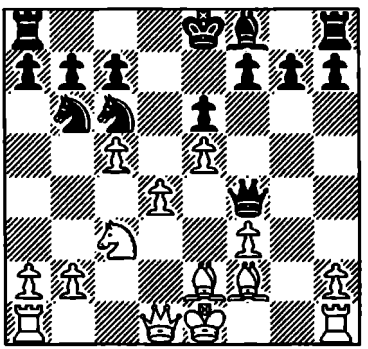
Game 43
Fedorov-Baburin
Istanbul Olympiad 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 e6 9 ♘f3 ♗g4 10 ♕d2

This is currently thought of as the main line, but it is not necessarily the most testing move for Black. The quiet 10 ♗e2 has been looking quite venomous: 10...♗xf3 11 gxf3 and now:

a) After 11...♕d7 White should play 12 ♕d2 which takes the games along similar lines to 10 ♕d2 ♕d7 11 0-0-0 but with Black having played 11...♗xf3 rather early. Instead 12 f4 ♖d8! 13 d5 ♗b4! 14 ♗xb6 axb6 15 ♗f3 exd5 16 cxd5 ♕h3 was good for Black in van der Wiel-Vaganian, Ter Apel 1993.

b) 11...♕h4+ 12 ♗f2 ♕f4 13 c5



with a further split:

b1) After 13...♘d7 14 ♗b5 ♗e7 (14...f6?! has been suggested by Burgess, but it looks bad after 15 ♕b3) 15 0-0 ♗h4 16 ♗xc6 bxc6 17 ♕a4 0-0 18 ♖ad1 White was simply threatening to take the pawn on c6 in Koch-Konopka, Clichy 1993.

b2) 13...♘d5 14 ♘xd5 exd5 15 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ (the endgame is certainly unpleasant for Black, but in any case the position seems cramped and passive; 15...♕f5 16 ♕d3 ♕d7 17 f4 ♘e7 18 ♖g1 h5 19 ♗f1 g6 20 ♗h3 was also good for White in Bongers-Etmans, Dieren 1998) 16 ♔xd2 g6 17 f4 ♗h6 18 ♗e3 ♘e7 19 ♗d3 ♘f5 20 ♗xf5 gxf5 21 ♖hg1 ♔d7 22 ♖g3 ♖ag8 23 b4 ♖g6 24 ♔e2 ♗f8 25 ♖g5 ♔e6 26 ♖h5 h6 27 b5 ♗e7 28 a4 ♖b8 29 ♖b1 and Black was under massive pressure in Timman-De Firmian, Malmo 2001.

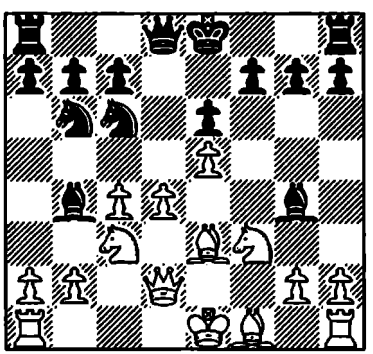
10...♗b4!?

This is Black's most trendy move, trying to provoke White into playing a2-a3 so that a later ...♘c6-a5 will have greater force. He can also consider two other options:

a) A young Jan Timman played

10...♗e7 11 0-0-0 f6!? and went on to win against Schenstok in a 1968 game in Holland. The game continued 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♘e4 0-0 14 ♗e2 ♕e8 15 ♘fg5 ♗f5 16 g4 ♗xg5 17 ♘xg5 ♗g6 18 h4 h5 19 gxh5 ♗f5, which looks very dangerous for Black but probably isn't that easy.

b) 10...♕d7 11 ♗e2 0-0-0 (the position after the voluntary 11...♗xf3 12 gxf3 can also be reached via 10 ♗e2 ♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♕d7 12 ♕d2 and seems quite difficult for Black after the further 12...0-0-0 13 0-0-0 ♗b4 14 a3 ♗e7 15 ♘e4 f6 16 exf6 gxf6 17 ♖hg1) 12 c5! ♗xf3 (12...♘d5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 b4 a6 15 a4 looks very strong – White can still castle kingside!) 13 cxb6 ♗xg2 14 ♗b5 a6 (14...♗xh1 15 bxa7 will be followed by promotion) 15 ♕xg2 axb5 (Shabalov-Kengis, Riga 1989) and now Shabalov gave 16 a4! b4 17 bxc7 ♕xc7 18 ♘b5 ♕d7 19 0-0 as being good for White.

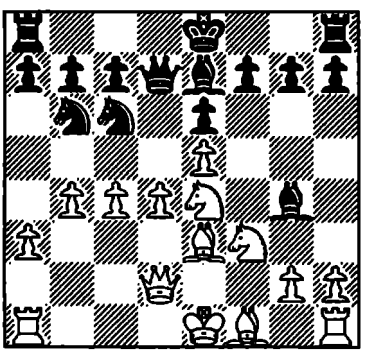


11 a3 ♗e7!? 12 ♘e4?!

It's too late for 12 ♗e2 because of 12...♘a5. After 12 ♖d1 Black can open it up with 12...f6, while 12 b4 ♗xf3 13 gxf3 ♗h4+ cost White his castling rights in Kremenietsky-Vaganian, Moscow 1981. Last, but not least, it isn't good to play 12 0-0-0 because of 12...♘a5 13 ♕c2 ♗f5 – yet another advantage of Black keeping his bishop.

12...♕d7 13 b4

White tries to profit from the move 11 a3, but these space gaining operations leave huge gaping spaces behind the ranks. The game Hübner-Hort, Biel 1987 went 13 ♗e2 0-0-0 14 0-0-0 ♗f5 15 ♘g3 ♗g6 16 h4? (16 ♗d3 is better) and now Black uncorked the startling 16...♘b4! 17 b3 (17 axb4 ♕a4 18 ♗d3 ♘xc4) 17...♘c2 18 c5 ♕c6! 19 ♗d3. Here 19...♘xa3 20 ♔b2 ♗xd3 21 ♕xd3 ♗xc5 would have been the crispest way to finish matters according to Hort.



13...♗xf3! 14 gxf3 0-0-0

According to Baburin, Black can play 14...♖d8 15 ♖d1 ♗h4+ 16 ♘g3 f6 17 f4 0-0, which also leaves White's game looking very ropy.

15 ♖d1 ♗h4+ 16 ♘g3 f6!

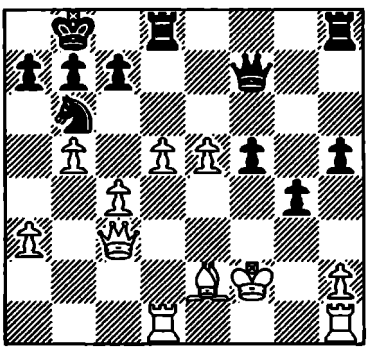
Commencing undermining operations.

17 b5 ♘e7 18 ♕a5 ♔b8 19 ♗e2 ♘f5 20 ♗f2 ♕f7! 21 f4 g5! 22 ♘xf5 ♗xf2+ 23 ♔xf2 exf5 24 d5 fxe5 25 fxe5 g4

White's centre has remained intact

but his king is horribly exposed. Another good line was 25...♕e7 26 ♕c3 ♘a4 27 ♕d4 ♘c5, with the knight threatening to come into the e4-square.

26 ♕c3 h5



27 e6

Perhaps 27 d6 would have been better, but in any case White is in trouble.

27...♕e7 28 h3 ♖hg8 29 hxg4 hxg4 30 ♕d4 f4 31 ♗d3 ♕g5 32 ♗e4 f3! 33 c5 ♘c8

Baburin also mentioned the line 33...g3+ 34 ♔xf3 g2 35 ♖hg1 ♖gf8+ 36 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 37 ♔e3! ♘xd5+ 38 ♗xd5 ♕g3+ 39 ♔e2 ♖xd5, but bringing the knight round is much simpler.

34 ♖h7 g3+ 35 ♔xf3 g2 36 ♖g1 ♖df8+ 37 ♔e2?

37 ♖f7! is White last chance.

37...♕g4+ 38 ♔d3 ♖f3+ 39 ♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 40 ♔d2 ♖g4 41 ♕e3 ♕xd5+ 42 ♔c1 ♖e4 43 ♕f2 ♕c4+ 44 ♕c2 ♕f1+ 45 ♕d1 ♕f4+ 46 ♔b1 ♕f5 0-1

Game 44
Mendes-R.Rodrigues
Figueira Foz Honra 1999

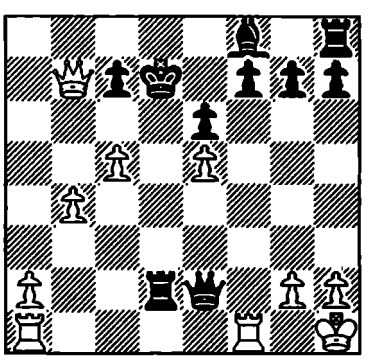
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 e6 9 ♘f3 ♕d7

Another way of putting pressure on d4 which has many similarities to 9...♗g4.

10 d5

A tricky line in which the complications are still unresolved. What is clear is that White must have nerves of steel to play this way as his king may have to spend some time in the centre.

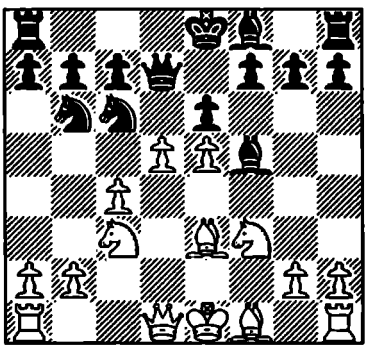
White's most testing line is 10 ♗e2 after which the once traditional 10...0-0-0 11 0-0 (11 ♕d2 ♘b4) 11...♗g4 now seems very dangerous for Black because of 12 c5! (12 ♘g5!? ♘xc4 13 ♖xf7 ♕e8 14 ♗f2 h6 15 ♗xg4 hxg5 16 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 17 ♕e2 ♘b6 is unconvincing) 12...♘d5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 b4!? (14 ♘g5 ♗xe2 15 ♕xe2 ♘xd4 16 ♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 17 ♔h1 ♕d2 18 ♕xd2 ♖xd2 19 ♖xf7 ♗xc5 20 ♘xe6 ♗d4 21 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 led to drawish rook endgames in Ligterink-Gipslis, Amsterdam 1976 and Gipslis-Kengis, Jurmala 1983) 14...♕e4 15 ♕b3 ♘xd4! 16 ♘xd4 ♗xe2 17 ♘xe2!? ♖d3 18 ♕a4 ♕xe3+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xe2 20 ♕xa7 ♖d2 21 ♕a8+ ♔d7 22 ♕xb7



when White had a very strong attack

in the game Art.Minasian-Donchenko, Naberezhnye Chelmy 1988.

10...♖d8 looks much safer, after which 11 0-0 (11 ♕d2 ♘a5!? is an untested idea of Hellers) 11...♗g4 12 c5 (12 ♘g5 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 15 ♔h1 ♖d7 16 ♕f3!? also needs more analysis) 12...♘d5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♘g5 ♗xe2 15 ♕xe2 ♖d7 16 ♕f2 ♘d8 was the ultra-solid continuation of Macieja-Timmer, Pardubice 1994.



10...exd5 11 cxd5 ♘b4 12 ♘d4 ♘6xd5 13 ♘xf5??

White should play 13 ♘xd5, after which 13...♘xd5 14 ♘xf5 ♗b4+ (14...0-0-0!? 15 ♕d3 g6 is also very interesting, Bullockus-Oakley, correspondence 1984) 15 ♔e2! 0-0-0 16 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 17 ♕xd5 ♕f5 18 ♕c4 ½-½ left unanswered questions in Tomic-Gipslis, Dortmund 1978.

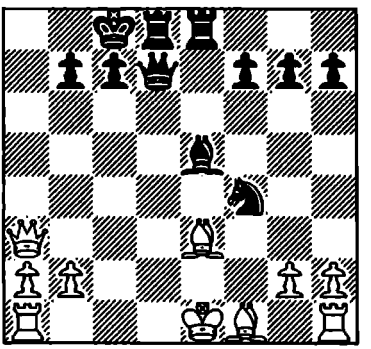
13...0-0-0

Theory gives the simple 13...♕xf5 14 ♘xd5 0-0-0 as the refutation. But Rodrigues comes up with something far more spectacular and beautiful.

14 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♗xa7

And not 16 ♕xd5 because of 16...♗b4+.

16...♗xe5 17 ♕b3 ♘f4 18 ♗e3 ♖he8 19 ♕a3



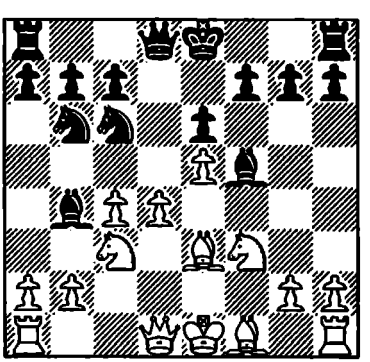
19...♕d2+!! 20 ♗xd2 ♗xb2+ 21 ♕e3 ♗xa1 22 ♔f2?

The only way to keep playing was with 22 ♕xe8, forlorn though this is.

22...♗d4 23 g3 ♗xe3+ 24 ♗xe3 ♘d3+ 25 ♔f3 ♘e5+ 26 ♔f2 ♘g4+ 0-1

Game 45
Kulaots-Kengis
Riga Zonal 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 e6 9 ♘f3 ♗b4

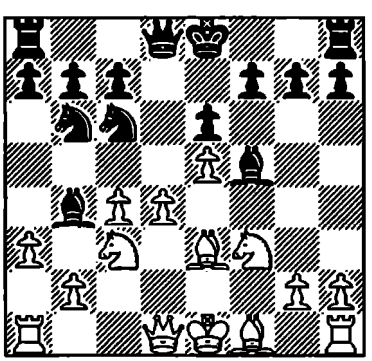


Although this move has a poor reputation, its adoption by an Alekhine specialist such as Kengis should at least earn it a second look.

10 a3?!

If White plays the solid 10 ♗e2, Black should try to develop counterplay with 10...0-0 (10...♘a5!? 11 c5 ♘d5 12 ♗d2 ♘c6 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♗g5 was played in Rohde-Shamkovich, New York 1976) 11 0-0 ♘a5!? 12 ♘d2 (12 c5 ♗xc3! 13 bxc3 ♘bc4! is an excellent possibility that was not available for Black in the Rohde-Shamkovich game because White could take the knight and play ♕a4+) 12...♗g6 13 ♕e1 c5 14 a3 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♖c8 16 ♖c1 ♕e7 and the veiled threat against the a3-pawn gave Black excellent counterplay in Goldenberg-Ghizdavu, Graz 1972.

After 10 ♖c1 the Czech GM Pavel Blatny suggested the line 10...0-0 11 a3 ♗xc3+ 12 ♖xc3 ♕d7 13 ♗e2 ♖fd8 14 0-0 ♗g4 15 ♔h1 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♘xd4 17 ♗g5 with an 'unclear' assessment. 10...♗g4!? is also interesting, aiming for similar play to the 9...♗g4 line, but with queenside castling for White ruled out.



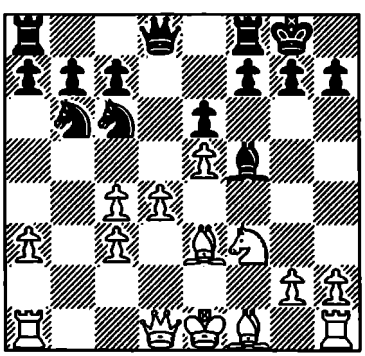
10...♗xc3+

Before anyone gets the idea to play 10...♗e7? I should point out that 11 d5 will be very strong because Black's knight is unable to come to b4.

11 bxc3 0-0!?

A very simple and reasonable move, preparing to play 12...♘a5.

In the game Faibisovich-Bagirov, Baku 1969 the Alekhine maestro gained the advantage after 11...♕d7 12 ♗e2 ♘a5 13 ♘d2 ♕c6 14 ♗f3? ♕a4 15 c5 ♕xd1+ 16 ♖xd1 ♘d5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 0-0 ♗g6! 19 ♖de1 ♔d7; Black is better due to his superior pawn structure. Bagirov later suggested 14 0-0 as an improvement and gave the line 14...♘axc4 15 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 16 d5 ♘xe3 17 dxc6 ♘xd1 18 cxb7 ♖b8 19 ♗b5+ ♔f8 20 ♖axd1 ♖xb7 21 ♖d8+ ♔e7 22 ♖xh8 ♖xb5.



12 c5 ♘d5 13 ♗d2 f6!

With White still lagging behind in development, Black prises the position open.

14 exf6 ♕xf6 15 ♗b5 e5 16 ♗xc6 bxc6 17 dxe5

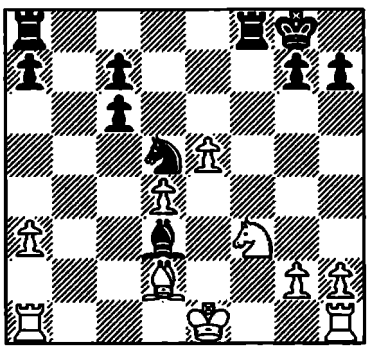
After 17 ♘xe5 ♕h4+ 18 ♔e2 (or 18 g3 ♕e4+) 18...♖ae8! 19 h3 ♖xe5+ 20 dxe5 ♕e4+ Black gets a winning attack.

17...♕e7 18 ♕a4

White should have tried 18 c4!?, but

then 18...♘f6 19 ♗g5 ♗g4 looks pretty good for Black in any case.

18...♕xc5 19 ♕d4 ♕xd4 20 cxd4 ♗d3!



This bishop cuts through White's position like a knife through butter. Of particular importance is the fact that it controls the b1-square and thus prevents White from contesting the b-file.

21 ♗b4 ♖fb8 22 ♔d2 ♗g6 23 ♖hc1 a5 24 ♗c3 ♖b3 25 a4 c5! 26 ♖a2

26 dxc5 loses a piece after 26...♘xc3 27 ♖xc3 ♖d8+.

26...c4 27 ♘e1 ♖f8 28 ♘f3 ♘f4 0-1

The pawn on g2 is falling and with it, White's position.

Summary

I don't think that it's the right time to start playing the trendy 9...♗g4 unless Black can find a way to generate meaningful counterplay after 10 ♗e2. So unless Black wants to study the complications arising from 9...♗e7 10 d5 he should take a look at 9...♕d7 (and after 10 ♗e2 play 10...♖d8) or 9...♗b4.

I recommend that full-time Alekhine players use one of the solid lines given in this chapter together with one of the more experimental lines given in Chapter 8. It is probably advisable to learn the solid line first.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♘c6 7 ♗e3 ♗f5 *(D)* **8 ♘c3 e6 9 ♘f3 ♗e7**

9...♗g4 *(D)* – *Game 43*

9...♕d7 – *Game 44*

9...♗b4 – *Game 45*

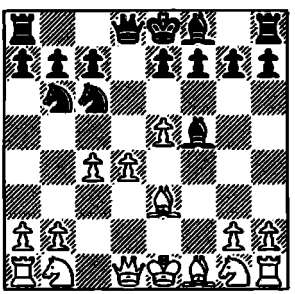
10 d5

10 ♗e2 0-0 11 0-0 f6 12 exf6 ♗xf6 – *Game 40*

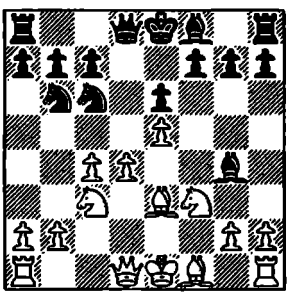
10...exd5

10...♘b4 – *Game 42*

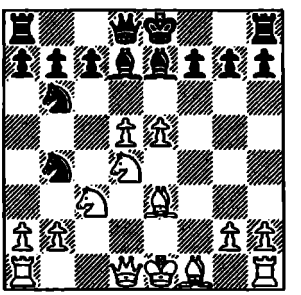
11 cxd5 ♘b4 12 ♘d4 ♗d7 *(D)* **13 ♕f3** – *Game 41*



3...♗b4

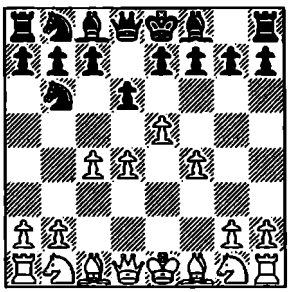


3...♕e7



9...0-0

CHAPTER EIGHT



Four Pawns Attack: Divergences

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4

In this chapter we take a look at Black's more extreme ways of countering White's massive pawn centre.

Games 46 and 47 illustrate the razor-sharp 6...c5, originally championed by Ljubojevic in the 1970s and more recently taken up by Shabalov. Actually this is starting to look like a drawing line, due largely to the fact that if Black improves on Game 47 with 10...♗b4, he is likely to get an equal endgame but nothing more. In Game 48 Black combined 6...c5 with 7...g6, which enters really uncharted territory.

In Game 49 Black used an alternative method of playing for ...c7-c5; he first developed his queen's bishop and then brought his knight out to a6. White should play 8 ♗e3 with chances for a better endgame. Djurhuus found himself in big trouble when his centre fell apart.

Amongst the weird and wonderful ways Black has tried to undermine White's pawn front, the weirdest and most wonderful must be with 5...g5!?. Despite its astonishing appearance, the theoretical reputation of this move has never been better, and that due largely to the efforts of the correspondence player Schirmer. Game 50 demonstrates his treatment of the line and his many new ideas. In fact I've added one of my own, 11...♕g6 instead of his 11...♗g7.

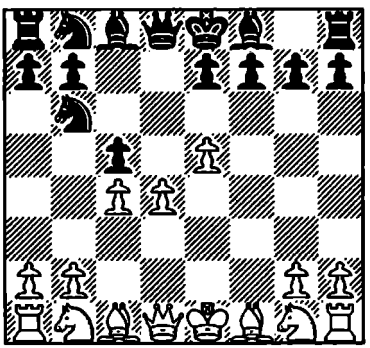
Game 51 is a gambit line invented by the Australian IM Wohl. His preparation backfired in this game but he still obtained strong counterplay. The worry is that 11 ♗e3 may leave Black with inadequate counterplay, but in such obscure positions it is always possible that an improvement will be found.

The Russian player Pushkin has been experimenting with 5...g6, with the theoretical reputation of this move having been considerably enhanced by Game 52. My own feeling is that White should actually avoid the automatic 6 ♘c3 as this knight may be required to defend the c-pawn. I suspect that Black will have far more difficulty after my suggested 6 ♘f3, followed by 7 ♗e2

and 8 0-0.

Game 46
Vetemaa-Shabalov
USSR 1986

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 c5!?



One of the sharpest lines at Black's disposal, it's no accident that it has been adopted by the likes of Ljubojevic and Shabalov.

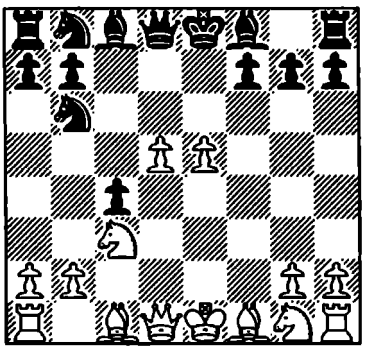
7 d5

White has a much quieter possibility in 7 ♘f3 but 7...cxd4 8 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 9 ♘xd4 (Velimirovic-Bagirov, Palma de Mallorca 1989) and now 9...e6 10 ♘b5 ♘a6 looks solid enough.

7...e6 8 ♘c3

The seemingly strong 8 d6 ♕h4+ 9 g3 ♕e4+ is not quite the simple win of a rook that it appears to be, but in any case White's compensation is probably inadequate. 10 ♕e2 ♕xh1 11 ♘f3 is met by 11...♘c6! 12 ♘bd2 ♘d7! 13 ♔f2 ♘dxe5! 14 ♘xe5 ♕xh2+ 15 ♗g2 ♘d4 16 ♕d1 ♗xd6 17 ♘f1 (finally trapping the queen) 17...♕xg2+ 18 ♔xg2 ♗xe5 with a decisive advantage according to Volzhin.

8...exd5 9 cxd5 c4



Reaching the critical position. Black is forcing White's pawns to advance in the hope that they will become weak.

10 a3?!

Preventing Black's threatened 10...♗b4, but losing time. White has a number of alternatives:

a) 10 ♗f4?! is bad because of 10...♗b4 11 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 12 ♕a4+ ♘c6 13 dxc6 ♘xb2, winning on the spot.

b) 10 ♕d4 ♘c6 11 ♕e4 ♘b4 12 a3 (12 d6 g6 threatens the horrific 13...♗f5) 12...♘4xd5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xc4 ♘c7 16 ♗e3 ♗e6 was fine for Black in Ciocaltea-Ljubojevic, Malaga 1971.

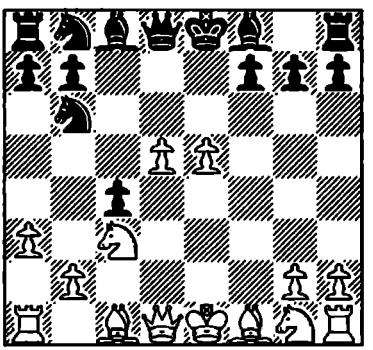
c) 10 d6!? ♘c6 11 ♘f3 (11 ♗f4!? g5!? needs testing) 11...♗g4 12 ♗f4 g5! 13 ♘e4 (13 ♗g3 ♗g7) 13...gxf4!! 14 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 15 exf6 0-0-0 and Black had more than enough for the queen in Paunovic-Mrsevic, Yugoslavia 1982.

d) 10 e6 is good for Black after 10...♗c5 11 exf7+ ♔xf7 12 ♘f3 ♖e8+ 13 ♗e2 ♗g4.

e) 10 ♗e3 ♗b4 11 ♗xb6 is a radical way of securing the d5-pawn, after which Alexandrov-Shabalov, Riga 1987 continued 11...♕xb6 12 ♕d2 0-0 13

♘f3 ♗g4 14 h3 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘d7 16 f4 ♘c5 17 0-0-0 ♘e4 18 ♕d4 ♘xc3 19 ♕xb6 and now van der Tak's recommendation of 19...axb6 20 bxc3 ♗xc3 would give Black good counterplay.

f) 10 ♘f3 is seen in the next game.



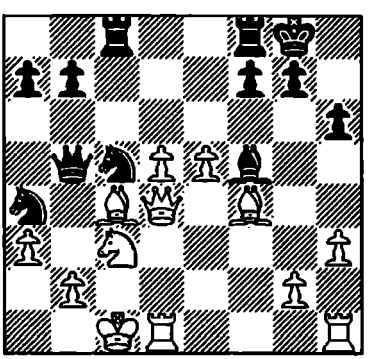
10...♗c5

Preventing White from castling kingside, and the other flank turns out to be pretty dangerous too.

11 ♘f3 0-0 12 ♗e2 ♗f5! 13 ♗g5 ♕d7 14 ♕d2 h6 15 ♗f4 ♘a6 16 0-0-0 ♖ac8 17 h3 ♘a4!

The prelude to a really fantastic combination. Shabalov must have foreseen his 20th move at this point.

18 ♘d4 ♗xd4 19 ♕xd4 ♘6c5 20 ♗xc4 ♕b5!!



A move reminiscent of Frank Marshall's famous 'gold coins' move against Lewitsky, ...♕g3. The immediate threat is mate on b2, and the queen is immune to capture.

21 ♖d2

Both 21 ♘xb5 ♘b3 and 21 ♗xb5 ♘b3 are immediate mates, while 21 b4 loses to 21...♘b3+ 22 ♗xb3 ♖xc3+.

21...♘xc3 0-1

22 bxc3 allows 22...♕b1 mate, while 22 ♕xc3 is met by 22...♘b3+ 23 ♗xb3 ♕xb3.

Game 47
Grünfeld-Ljubojevic
Riga Interzonal 1979

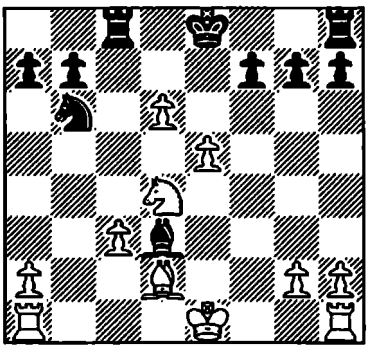
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♘c3 exd5 9 cxd5 c4 10 ♘f3

White's usual move, which leaves Black the choice about which knight to pin.

10...♗g4

Recently Black has been playing 10...♗b4! which leads to an endgame in which he gets excellent positional compensation for a pawn: 11 ♗xc4 (after Timman's suggestion of 11 ♗g5, Black seems to survive with 11...♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♕xd5 13 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 14 0-0-0 ♘e7 15 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 16 ♗xc4 ♗g4 17 ♖hf1 ♘c6) 11...♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♘xc4 13 ♕a4+ ♘d7 14 ♕xc4 ♘b6 15 ♕b5+ ♕d7 16 ♕xd7+ (after 16 ♕e2 ♕xd5 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♗a3 ♖e8 Black's pieces get well entrenched on the light squares) 16...♗xd7 17 d6 ♖c8 18 ♗d2 (18 ♗e3 is more active but then 18...♖xc3 19 ♗xb6 axb6 20 ♔d2 ♖a3 gave Black equality in Shirov-Shabalov, Riga 1986)

18...♗b5! (probably even more precise than the older 18...♘c4; first of all Black stops his opponent from castling) 19 ♘d4 ♗d3.



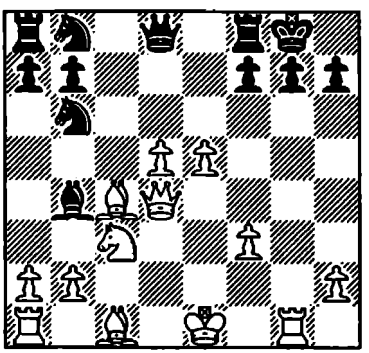
The fact Shulman-Baburin, San Francisco 2001 was agreed drawn at this point confirms the view that this position (the last word on the 6...c5 line) is fine for Black. The previous game in this line was MChess Pro-Shabalov, Boston 1994 which continued 20 ♔f2 ♔d7 21 ♖he1 ♖he8 22 a4 ♗g6 23 ♖a2 ♖c5 24 ♘f3 ♘c4 25 ♗f4 ♗h5 26 ♖ae2 ♗xf3 27 gxf3 ♖a5 28 ♖g1 g6 29 ♖b1 b6 30 ♖b4 ♘xe5, recovering the pawn with a good position. Shabalov actually lost this game but this was only due to a subsequent blunder.

11 ♕d4

This leads to some spectacular play, but it is not the only move. The simple 11 ♗e2 ♗c5 (11...♗b4 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♕xd5 14 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xc4 ♘b6 16 ♗b3 left Black facing menacing threats against f7 in Boudre-Werner, Royan 1988) 12 ♘g5 ♗f5 13 ♖f1 (13 ♗g4!? ♗d3 14 e6 {Durao-Silva, Portuguese Ch., Lisbon 1995} is also very interesting) 13...♗g6 14 h4 h6 (14...h5 15 ♗f4 allows White to build his position undisturbed) 15 h5 ♗d3 16 ♗xd3 cxd3 was played in S.Bücker-Fleck, Bünde 1985 and now Foisor's suggestion of 17 ♖xf7! hxg5 18 ♖xg7 ♘xd5 19 ♕f3 gives White a winning attack.

11...♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♗b4 13 ♗xc4 0-0 14 ♖g1

The spectacular 14 ♗h6!? should be answered by 14...♘8d7!, which leads to unexplored complications after 15 ♖g1 g6 16 e6 ♘e5!, and not 14...gxh6 15 e6 f6 16 d6! ♘xc4 17 e7! ♕e8 18 ♖g1+ ♔h8 19 ♕g4 ♖f7 (19...♕f7 20 ♕xc4!) 20 ♕g8+! ♕xg8 21 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 22 e8♕+ etc.



14...g6

14...♕c7? 15 e6 f6 16 ♗h6 ♕xc4 17 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 18 ♖g8+!! 1-0 was the conclusion of Ljubojevic-Honfi, Cacak 1970.

15 ♗g5

In such a sharp position, possession of the initiative is paramount. 15 ♗h6 is bad because of 15...♘c6 16 ♕e4 ♘xe5! 17 ♗xf8 ♕xf8, with a safe king and demonic piece activity for the sacrificed exchange.

15...♕c7 16 ♗b3 ♗c5 17 ♕f4 ♗xg1

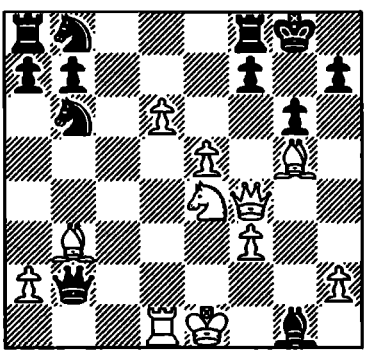
Driven by necessity rather than

greed. 17...♖e8 18 ♗f6 ♘8d7 19 ♘e4 ♖xe5 (19...♘xe5? is refuted by the devastating 20 ♖xg6+!!) 20 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 21 ♔e2 ♗d6 was played in Banaventure-Renaud, Le Havre 1977, and now 22 ♖ac1 would leave Black struggling. 17...♘8d7 is well met by 18 d6 ♕c6 19 0-0-0.

18 d6 ♕c5!

The only defence. 18...♕c8 19 0-0-0 ♗c5 20 e6! fxe6 21 ♕e5 ♖e8 (or 21...♘d5 22 d7!!) 22 ♗h6 ♕d7 23 ♘e4 ♘c6 24 ♘f6+ wins for White, as pointed out by Bronstein.

19 ♘e4 ♕d4 20 ♖d1 ♕xb2



21 e6?!

In such complex positions it can often take years to uncover the right path, and it seems that White missed his way at this point.

The correct line is 21 ♘f6+ ♔h8 22 ♖d2 ♕a1+ (22...♕b1+ 23 ♔e2 ♘8d7 24 ♕h4 h5 25 ♘xh5 was also winning for White in Moura-Rinaldi, correspondence 1983, while 22...♕c1+ 23 ♔e2 ♕c5 24 ♔f1 ♕c1+ 25 ♗d1 also leaves Black facing deadly threats to his king) 23 ♗d1! (23 ♖d1 ♕b2 24 ♖d2 repeats the position, while 23 ♔e2 ♘c6 24 ♕h4 h5 was unclear in Grünfeld-Wiemer, Tecklenburg 1984) 23...♘8d7 24 ♕h4 ♕xe5+ 25 ♔f1 h5 26 ♘xh5 gxh5 27 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 28 ♖g2 and White wins (Wiemer).

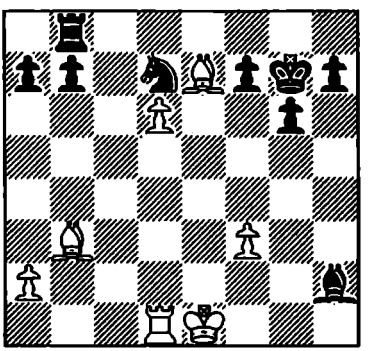
21...♘8d7! 22 e7 ♕xh2!

Black can afford to return some material as long as he breaks White's attack.

23 exf8♕+ ♖xf8 24 ♕xh2

A forlorn hope, but White has nothing better.

24...♗xh2 25 ♘f6+ ♔g7 26 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 27 ♗e7 ♖b8!



28 ♔f2

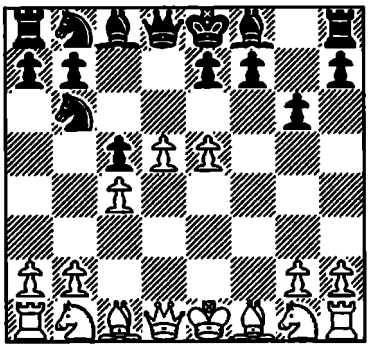
Black's precise 27th move ensured that 28 ♗a4 is met by 28...b5.

28...♗e5 29 ♖c1 ♘c5! 30 ♖d1 ♗f6 31 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 32 ♗c4 ♖d8 33 ♔g3 a6 34 ♗f1 ♔e5 35 f4+ ♔e6 36 ♗c4+ ♔f6 37 ♔f3 b5 0-1

Game 48
Volzhin-L.Svechnikov
USSR 1988

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 c5 7 d5 g6!?

An intriguing move which takes aim at the e5-pawn. As yet it has very little established theory.



8 ♗f4

White can also play 8 ♘c3 ♗g7 9 ♗f4 (9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♗xc5 ♘8d7 will recover the pawn with a good game, while 9 ♘f3 is met by 9...♗g4).

8...♗g7 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♕d2

Preparing to castle long. White has tried a couple of other plans:

a) 10 ♗d3 e6 11 d6 is dubious because it allows Black to start hammering away at e5. Ciuffoletti-Sedina, Saint Vincent 1998 continued 11...♘c6 12 ♘f3 ♘d7 13 ♕e2 ♘d4! 14 ♘xd4 cxd4 15 ♘b5 ♕a5+ 16 ♗d2 ♕b6 17 b4 ♘xe5 18 c5 ♘xd3+ 19 ♕xd3 ♕c6 20 0-0 e5 with the better game for Black.

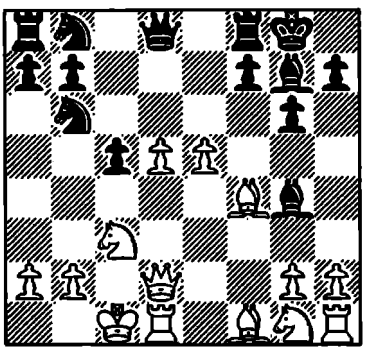
b) 10 ♗e2 e6 11 ♘f3 exd5 12 cxd5 ♗g4! 13 0-0 ♘8d7 14 ♕e1 ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♘xe5! 16 ♗xe5 ♖e8 won a pawn for Black in Moraru-Grunberg, Bucharest 1999.

c) 10 h3 is slow but nevertheless worth considering. White wants to develop his knight on f3 without it being pinned.

10...e6 11 0-0-0 exd5 12 cxd5 ♗g4!

12...c4 is not as good because of 13 ♘f3 ♗g4 14 ♗h6! ♗xf3 15 ♗xg7 ♗xd1? (15...♔xg7 16 gxf3 is miserable enough but this loses immediately) 16 ♗f6! and White won in Solomon-Kanikevich, Sydney 1991.

12...♘8d7 also fails to gain the much needed counterplay after 13 ♘f3 ♖e8 14 ♖e1. If White maintains his centre like this, Black will be struggling.



13 ♖e1!

White wants to kick Black's bishop out of g4 before developing the knight on f3. After 13 ♘f3 ♘8d7 Black threatens 14...♖e8 and it gets difficult for White to hold e5.

13...c4! 14 h3 ♗f5 15 g4

15 ♘f3 deserves consideration. Now Black comes up with a promising pawn sacrifice.

15...♗d3! 16 ♗xd3 cxd3 17 ♕xd3 ♘a6!

The immediate threat is 18...♘b4.

18 d6 ♖c8 19 ♔b1 ♘c4!

And now the idea is 20...♕b6. In a later game (Ilincic-Marinkovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1989) Black played the inferior 19...♘c5 but even here he had compensation after 20 ♕e2 ♘e6 21 ♗g3 ♘c4 22 ♘f3 ♕a5.

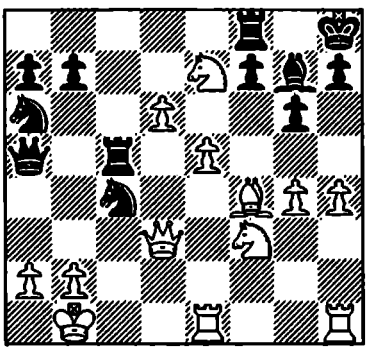
20 ♘d5 ♕a5! 21 ♘e7+ ♔h8 22 ♘f3 ♖c5

According to Volzhin, Black could

also consider 22...♘xb2!? as after 23 ♔xb2 ♘b4 24 ♕b3 ♖c2+ 25 ♔b1 ♖xa2 the attack is very strong.

23 h4?

Missing Black's reply. White had to play 23 ♕b3 ♘xb2 24 ♗d2 ♕a4 25 ♖e3 ♖b5 26 ♕xa4 ♘xa4+ 27 ♖b3 ♖xb3+ 28 axb3 ♘4c5, producing an endgame in which both sides have chances (Volzhin).



23...♕xa2+! 24 ♔xa2 ♘b4+ 25 ♔b3! ♘xd3 26 h5!

The only chance. With both players in time trouble it is Black's turn to make a mistake.

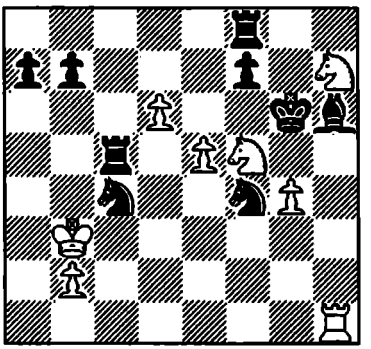
26...gxh5?

The right way to play it was with 26...♘xf4! 27 hxg6 fxg6! (and not 27...♘xg6? 28 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 29 ♖h1+ ♗h6 30 ♘g5+ ♔g7 31 ♘f5+ ♔g8 32 ♘xh6+ ♔g7 33 ♘f5+ ♔g8 34 ♖h7 ♘d2+ 35 ♔b4 ♖c4+ 36 ♔a3 ♘b1+ 37 ♔a2 ♖d8 38 ♖g7+ ♔f8 39 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 40 ♘h6+ ♔h8 41 ♖h7 mate).

27 ♖xh5 ♘xf4

After 27...♘xe1 Volzhin gave 28 ♘g5 h6 29 d7! ♘a5+ 30 ♔a2 ♘c6 31 ♘xc6 bxc6 32 d8♕! ♖xd8 33 ♘xf7+ ♔h7 34 ♘xd8 ♘d3 35 e6! ♖xh5 36 gxh5 ♗f6 37 ♗c7 with a drawish endgame.

28 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 29 ♖h1+ ♗h6 30 ♘g5+ ♔g7 31 ♘f5+ ♔g6 32 ♘h7!



32...♘d2+

Finally it is clear why White's king went to b3 on move 25. Had he played 25 ♔b1 he would be getting mated!

33 ♔a4 ♔xh7

Black decides not to push his luck and accedes to a draw by perpetual check. The attempt to play for a win with 33...♖c4+ 34 b4♘h5? is met by 35 ♖xh5 ♖xg4 36 ♖xh6+ ♔xf5 37 ♘xf8 ♔xe5 38 ♘d7+! ♔f5 39 ♖f6+ ♔e4 40 ♘c5+ ♔e5 41 d7 (Volzhin).

34 ♖xh6+ ♔g8 35 ♘e7+ ♔g7 36 ♘f5+ ♔g8 37 ♘e7+ ½-½

Game 49
Djurhuus-Agdestein
Norwegian Ch., Asker 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 ♗f5 6 ♘c3 e6 7 ♘f3

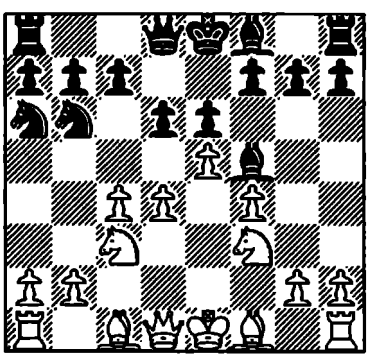
After 7 ♗e3 Black can play 7...dxe5 (7...♘a6?! would leave Black's knight on a6 badly placed after 8 exd6 cxd6 9 ♘f3) 8 fxe5 ♗b4!? (8...♘c6 transposes into the main lines) 9 ♘f3 c5, which is known to give Black good counterplay:

a) 10 ♕b3 cxd4!? 11 ♘xd4 ♕h4+ 12 g3 ♕e4 13 ♔f2 ♗xc3 14 ♗g2 ♕xd4! 15 ♗xd4 ♗xd4+ was good for Black in Marjanovic-Suba, Novi Sad 1974.

b) 10 a3 cxd4!? 11 ♕xd4 (11 ♗xd4 is met by 11...♗xc3+ 12 ♗xc3 ♕xd1+ 13 ♖xd1 ♘a4!, and 11 axb4 by 11...dxe3! 12 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 13 0-0-0+ ♔e7 14 c5 a5! 15 cxb6 axb4, threatening 16...♖a1+ {Miulescu-Ghuzdavu, Romania 1972}) 11...♕xd4 12 ♗xd4 ♗xc3+ 13 ♗xc3 ♘a4 14 ♗b4 ♘xb2 15 ♘d4 (Ostojic-Marovic, Yugoslav Ch. 1972) and now 15...a5! 16 ♗d6 ♗g6 17 ♘b5 ♘a6 is fine for Black according to Burgess.

7...♘a6

After 7...dxe5 8 fxe5 ♗b4 White can play 9 ♗d3! ♗xd3 (9...c5 10 0-0! cxd4 11 ♘e4 gives White a dangerous attack, and 9...♗g4 is met by 10 0-0! ♘c6 11 c5 ♘d5? 12 ♘e2) 10 ♕xd3 c5 11 0-0 cxd4 12 ♘e4 ♘6d7 (12...0-0 is met by 13 ♘eg5 g6 14 ♘xh7! ♔xh7 15 ♘g5+ ♔g7 16 ♕h3 ♖h8 17 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 18 ♕xe6) 13 ♘fg5 ♘xe5 14 ♕g3 ♘bd7 15 ♗f4 ♕b6 (15...♘g6 16 ♘xf7) 16 ♗xe5 f6 17 ♗d6 fxg5 18 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 19 ♘d6+ ♔e7 20 ♖f7+ ♔d8 21 ♕xg5+ with a winning attack in Ivkov-Timman, Amsterdam 1974.



8 ♗d3

This now turns out to be very dangerous for White, who shortly gets hit by a flurry of tactical blows. 8 exd6 would also be bad because of 8...♘b4!. White should play 8 ♗e3, after which 8...c5 9 dxc5 dxc5 10 a3! (stopping Black's a6 knight from getting back into the game) 10...♕xd1+ 11 ♖xd1 ♗e7 12 ♗e2 gave White the better endgame in Hort-Knezevic, Luhacovice 1973. He has more space and the knight on a6 is badly placed.

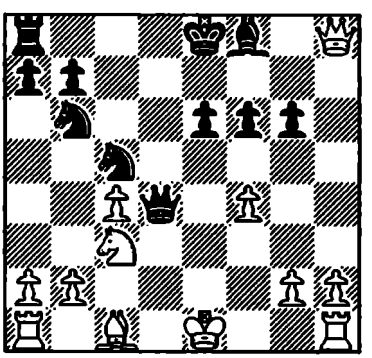
8...♗xd3 9 ♕xd3 c5 10 dxc5

I doubt that White really relished this line, but it seems to be the only way to play it. 10 d5 is bad because of 10...exd5 11 ♘xd5 dxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♘c7, winning the d5-pawn.

10...♘xc5 11 ♕e2 dxe5 12 ♘xe5 f6!?

Forcing the knight from e5 by hook or by crook. White is forced to go for broke and accept the offer of the exchange.

13 ♕h5+ g6 14 ♘xg6 hxg6 15 ♕xh8 ♕d4!



Putting the biggest lump available right in the middle of the board. Black has a multitude of threats and White's

queen is shut out of the game.

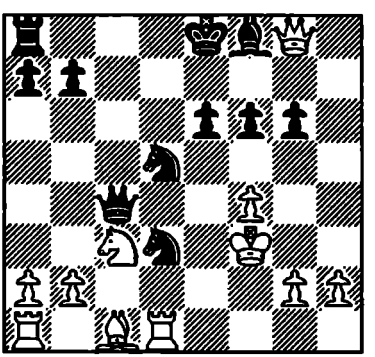
16 ♔e2

It seems that 16 ♔f1 would result in a draw by perpetual check after 16...♘e4 17 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 18 ♕h3 (18 ♕xf6 ♕d3+ 19 ♔f2 ♗c5+ 20 ♔e1 ♗b4+ 21 ♔f2 ♗c5+ is also a draw) 18...♕xc4+ 19 ♔g1 ♕e4 20 ♕g3 (or 20 ♔f2 ♗c5+ 21 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 22 ♔h4 g5+ 23 ♔g4 ♕f5+ 24 ♔g3 ♕d3+) 20...♗c5+ 21 ♔f1 ♕c4+ 22 ♔e1 ♕e4+ 23 ♔f1 ♕c4+ etc.

16 ♕h3 is bad because of 16...♘d3+ 17 ♔e2 ♕f2+ 18 ♔xd3 ♖d8+ 19 ♘d5 ♘xd5 20 ♕xe6+ ♘e7+ 21 ♔c3 ♕d4+ 22 ♔b4 ♖d6 23 ♕e1 ♖b6+ 24 ♔a3 ♕xc4 25 b3 ♕d4, according to analysis by Carsten Hansen.

16...♕xc4+ 17 ♔f3 ♘d5 18 ♖d1 ♘d3 19 ♕g8?

Under massive pressure, White loses his way. After 19 ♘xd5 ♕xd5+ 20 ♔g3 ♕f5 (20...♕d4 21 ♕g8) 21 ♗e3 (or 21 ♕h3 ♕e4 22 ♕g4 ♗b4) 21...e5 the position would still be massively complicated.



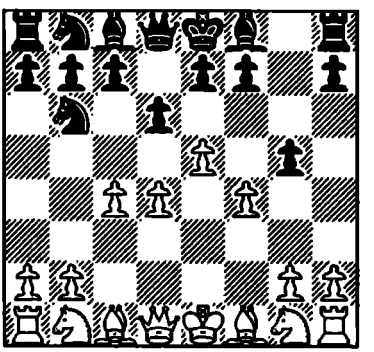
19...♘e7! 20 ♕h7 ♕c6+ 21 ♔e2 ♕xg2+

An old-fashioned king hunt.

22 ♔xd3 0-0-0+ 23 ♔c4 ♖xd1 24 ♘xd1 ♕e2+ 0-1

Game 50
Mischke-Schirmer
Correspondence 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 c4 ♘b6 4 d4 d6 5 f4 g5!?



You need to be very enthusiastic about undermining pawn centres to play this idea of GM Albin Planinc. More than thirty years after Planinc used to play it the shock value is still intact. And armed with his own ideas, Michael Schirmer thinks it's good enough for correspondence chess.

6 exd6

The theoretical 'refutation'. Another Schirmer game (Gerloff-Schirmer, correspondence 1989) went 6 fxg5 dxe5 7 d5 (7 dxe5 ♕xd1+ 8 ♔xd1 ♗g7 9 ♘f3 ♗g4 is good for Black) 7...e6 8 ♘f3 exd5 9 ♗e2 e4 10 ♘e5 ♕e7 11 ♘g4 ♗xg4 12 ♗xg4 ♕b4+ 13 ♘c3 ♕xc4 14 ♗e2 ♕c5 15 ♕d2 ♘c6 16 ♗g4 ♘e5 17 ♗e2 0-0-0 18 h4 ♗g7 19 ♖f1 ♖he8 20 ♘b5?? ♘d3+ 0-1 – a total massacre, but White's play was unimpressive.

In the classic Eales and Williams book on the Alekhine, 5...g5 is relegated

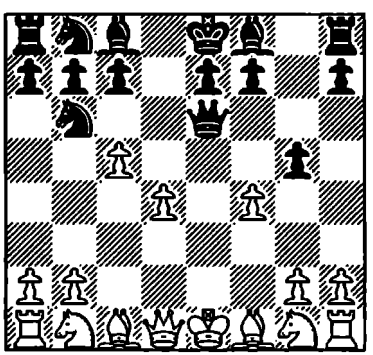
to a side note. But neither of the suggestions offered seem very good; 6 ♘f3 can be met by 6...g4 and 6 ♕h5 by 6...dxe5. Meanwhile, 6 d5?! e6 7 f5 exf5 8 e6 ♕f6 was better for Black in Ermakov-Keene, correspondence 1971-72.

If White is in search of a good line against 5...g5!?, then maybe he should also look at simple development with 6 ♘c3.

6...♕xd6!

This was thought to be bad, with no less an authority than Vlastimil Hort recommending White's reply. Black's earlier try was 6...gxf4 but then 7 dxc7! ♕xc7 8 ♘c3 e5 9 dxe5 ♘c6 10 ♗xf4 ♗e6 11 ♘e4 ♗b4+ 12 ♔f2 ♘xc4 13 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 14 ♘f3 was horrible in Tringov-Planinc, Varna 1970.

7 c5 ♕e6+



8 ♔f2!?

At this point Hort gave 8 ♕e2 but then in Zoels-Schirmer, 1993, Black generated powerful counterplay with 8...♘d5 9 ♕xe6 (delaying the exchange of queens with 9 fxg5 ♗g7 10 ♘f3 ♘c6 doesn't help White) 9...♗xe6 10 fxg5 ♗g7 11 ♘f3 ♘c6 12 ♗b5 ♘db4! (the key move, avoiding doubled pawns and opening the d-file against the d4-pawn) 13 ♘a3 0-0-0 14 ♗xc6 ♘xc6 15 ♘c2 ♗f5 16 ♘e3 ♗d3 17 ♔d2 ♗e4 18 ♘c2 ♗xf3 19 gxf3 ♘xd4 20 ♘xd4 ♖xd4+ 21 ♔e2 ♖c4 22 ♗e3 ♖c2+ 23 ♔d3 ♖xb2 0-1.

8...♘d5 9 ♗c4

The game Blake-Schirmer, correspondence 1994 continued 9 fxg5 ♗g7 10 ♗c4 ♘c6 11 ♘f3 ♕f5 12 ♗e3? ♘xe3 13 ♔xe3 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♕xg5+ 15 ♔d3 ♗f5+ 16 ♔c3 ♕e3+, when Black recovered the piece with a winning attack.

9...gxf4 10 ♕f3

White could also consider simple development with 10 ♘f3, after which 10...♕f5 could be Black's best.

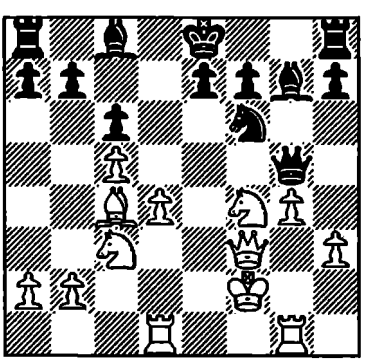
10...c6 11 ♗xf4 ♗g7

I suggest 11...♕g6 (!), keeping e7 defended, the g-file open and preparing ...♗e6. The position looks very interesting and complex.

12 ♘e2 ♘d7 13 ♘bc3 ♘7f6 14 h3 ♕d7 15 ♖ad1 ♘xf4 16 ♘xf4 ♕f5

16...0-0?! 17 ♖he1 is poor for Black, so he leaves his king on e8 for the moment in order to defend the e-pawn.

17 g4 ♕g5 18 ♖hg1!?



White can also try to eliminate Black's dark-square bishop with 18

♘h5, after which 18...♘xh5 19 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 20 ♕xh5 ♖f8+ 21 ♔g2 ♕xh5 22 gxh5 gives White slightly the better of the endgame, but 18...♕h4+ 19 ♔g2 ♖g8!? is still messy.

18...0-0 19 ♖ge1 ♖d8 20 ♔g3 h5 21 ♖e5?!

In his notes, Shirmer gave 21 ♘e4 ♘xe4+ 22 ♕xe4 as being better.

21...hxg4 22 ♕e3?

After this White has nothing. He had to try 22 ♖xg5 gxf3 23 ♘g6! e6 24 ♘e5 with a complex struggle ahead.

22...♗f5 0-1

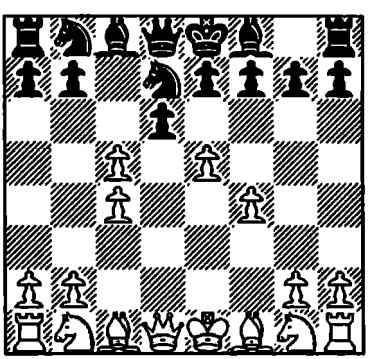
Game 51
Mamadshoev-Wohl
Yerevan Olympiad 1996

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 c5!? 6 dxc5

6 d5 is met by 6...e6, with very strong counterplay.

6...♘6d7

6...dxc5 7 ♕xd8+ gives Black a truly horrific endgame, which is not at all what Black had in mind. Instead he gambits a couple of pawns for what turns out to be quite interesting compensation.



7 cxd6 exd6 8 exd6 ♘f6! 9 ♕e2+ ♗e6 10 ♘c3

10 f5? doesn't work because of 10...♕a5+.

10...g6!

Wohl had originally prepared 10...♕a5, but changed his mind during the game.

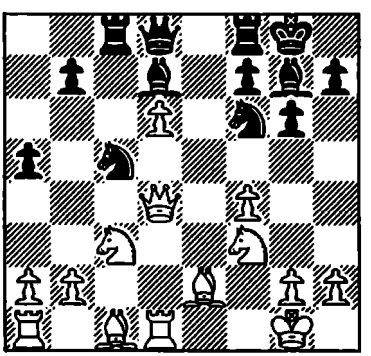
11 c5

In a subsequent game (Smeets-Wohl, Zwolle 2001) White played 11 ♗e3 ♗g7 12 0-0-0 and left his opponent with very little compensation after 12...0-0 13 ♘f3 ♘c6 14 ♕d2 ♕a5 15 ♘d4 ♘xd4 16 ♗xd4 b5 17 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 18 ♘d5 etc. It remains to be seen if Wohl has an improvement ready.

11...♗g7 12 ♕b5+ ♘bd7 13 ♘f3

In giving the check on b5, White might have intended 13 ♕xb7 ♘xc5 14 ♕c7, exchanging queens and staying a pawn up. But by now he might have realised that after 14...♕xc7 15 dxc7 0-0 Black's active pieces provide good compensation for the material deficit. After c7 drops it will only be one pawn.

13...0-0 14 ♗e2 ♖c8 15 0-0 ♘xc5 16 ♖d1 ♗d7! 17 ♕b4 a5 18 ♕d4!



Over the next few moves, some fancy footwork keeps the queen on the

g1-a7 diagonal. After 18 ♕a3 Black can generate ferocious play with 18...b5 19 ♗xb5 ♕b6 etc.

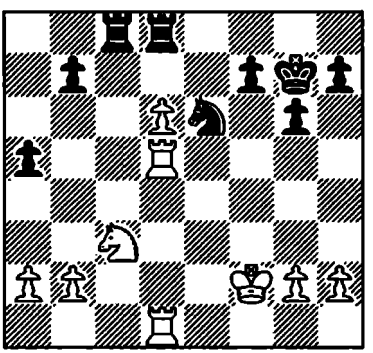
18...♘g4 19 ♘e5 ♘e6 20 ♕a7! ♘xe5 21 fxe5 ♗xe5 22 ♕f2! ♗c6

Preventing 23 ♘d5.

23 ♗h6 ♗g7?

After his brave and imaginative earlier play, Wohl suddenly loses his nerve. Black should sacrifice the exchange with 23...♗xd6! 24 ♗xf8 ♕xf8, when the mighty pair of bishops provide excellent compensation.

24 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 25 ♗b5! ♗xb5 26 ♘xb5 ♕g5 27 ♘c3 ♕c5 28 ♖d5 ♕xf2+ 29 ♔xf2 ♖fd8 30 ♖ad1



30...b6?

The final mistake? According to GM Ian Rogers, Black could still draw with 30...♘c5.

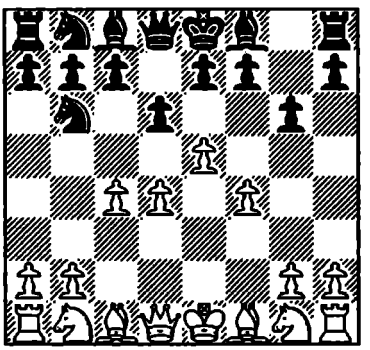
31 d7 ♖c5 32 ♘a4! ♖c2+ 33 ♖1d2 ♖xd2+ 34 ♖xd2 ♘c5?!

The last hope was 34...b5, though this does look rather ugly after 35 ♘b6! ♖b8 36 ♘c8 ♘d8.

35 ♘xc5 bxc5 36 ♔e3 ♔f6 37 ♖d5 a4 38 ♔d3 ♔e6 39 ♔c4 ♖xd7 40 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 41 ♔xc5 f5 42 ♔b4 f4 43 ♔xa4 g5 44 ♔b3 g4 45 ♔c3 h5 46 ♔d3 h4 47 ♔e2 1-0

Game 52
Brener-Pushkin
USSR 1988

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 g6!?



Another interesting line in which the theoretical 'refutation' has been rendered totally unconvincing.

6 ♘c3

In view of the dangers to his c-pawn in this line, White might do well to consider the unpretentious 6 ♘f3 ♗g7 7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0, after which 8...♗e6 can be met by 9 ♘bd2.

6...♗g7 7 ♗e3 0-0

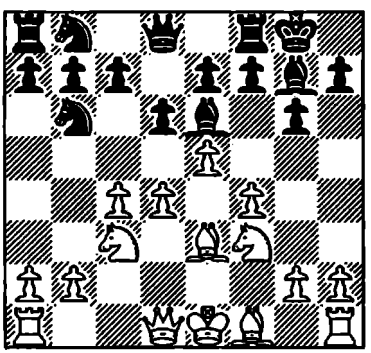
The immediate 7...♗e6!? is also worth considering, a game Kotek-Sergiev, Czech Republic 1997 continuing 8 ♕b3 (8 c5 is met by 8...♘d5; White's best may be 8 ♘f3, after which 8...0-0 transposes back into the game) 8...a5! 9 a4 ♘a6 10 ♖d1 ♘b4 11 ♘f3 d5! 12 cxd5 (12 c5?! ♘c4!) 12...♘4xd5! 13 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 14 ♕c2 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘d5 16 ♗c1 e6 with a clear advantage for Black because of his superior pawn structure and grip on d5.

8 ♘f3

White has also tried the supposed 'refutation' 8 c5!?, but then 8...♘6d7 is not at all clear (and not 8...dxc5 9 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 10 ♖xd1 ♘6d7 11 ♘d5 etc.). After the further moves 9 ♘f3 b6! 10 b4 ♗b7 11 ♗e2 a5 12 a3 bxc5 13 bxc5 dxc5 14 dxc5 ♘a6, Black had excellent counterplay in the game Rogers-Löffler, Wijk aan Zee 1996. 9 h4!? has been suggested by Volzhin and would need an energetic response by Black; it is certainly very dangerous after, for example, 9...b6 10 ♕f3 c6 11 h5.

8...♗e6!

Once again this is the key to Black's counterplay; the attack on the c-pawn is surprisingly difficult to meet. 8...dxe5 9 dxe5! condemns him to a cramped and passive game.



9 ♕b3

After 9 ♘d2 dxe5 10 fxe5 (10 dxe5 may be White's best, but Black has an easy game after 10...♘c6, intending ...f7-f6) 10...c5! 11 d5 (or 11 dxc5 ♘6d7) 11...♗f5 12 ♗f4 e6! 13 d6 ♘c6 14 ♘f3 ♘d7, Black won the e5-pawn in Schmidt Schaeffer-Haakert, Germany 1988.

Of White's other moves, 9 d5? is downright bad because of 9...♗g4 10 exd6 exd6, intending 11...♖e8, whilst 9 b3 allows 9...c5! 10 dxc5 ♘6d7 11 cxd6 exd6 12 ♕xd6 ♘xe5! etc.

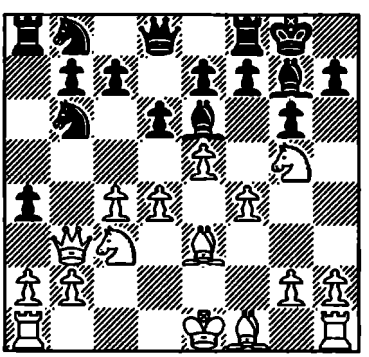
9...a5! 10 ♘g5

The threat of 10...a4 is quite difficult to meet; after 10 a4?! ♘a6 Black gets the b4-square as in the Kotek-Sergiev game above.

White's can play 10 ♘e4!?, after which 10...d5 11 ♘ed2 (11 ♘eg5?! dxc4 12 ♘xe6 cxb3 13 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 14 axb3 ♘c6 gave Black the better endgame in Nikitin-Pushkin, USSR 1988) 11...dxc4 12 ♘xc4 ♘c6 looks fairly even. White has more space which is compensated by Black's powerful grip on the d5-square.

10...a4!

And not 10...♗f5 because of the powerful thrust 11 c5.



11 ♘xe6

11 ♕b5?! can be met by 11...♗d7 12 ♕b4 ♘c6 13 ♕a3 f6!, detonating White's centre.

11...axb3 12 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 13 a3 ♘c6 14 0-0-0?!

After this White gets renewed problems with his c4-pawn. Volzhin recommended an improvement for White in 14 ♖c1, his analysis continuing

14...dxe5 15 dxe5 ♘d4 16 ♗d3 ♘c2+ 17 ♗xc2 (17 ♔e2 ♖xd3! 18 ♔xd3 ♖d8+ 19 ♔e2 ♘xe3 20 ♔xe3 ♘xc4+ 21 ♔e4 ♘xb2) 17...♘xc4! 18 ♔e2!? bxc2 19 ♖xc2 with equality.

14...♘a5! 15 c5 dxc5 16 dxc5 ♖xd1+ 17 ♘xd1

17 ♔xd1 ♘bc4 18 ♗c1 ♖d8+ 19 ♔e1 f6! puts White in even deeper trouble.

17...♘bc4 18 ♗d4 ♖d8 19 ♗c3 ♖d5 20 ♗b4 g5!

An Alekhine's Defence dream – the undermining operations finally cause White's centre to collapse.

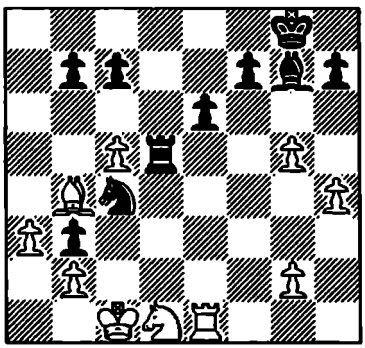
21 fxg5

21 g3 gxf4 22 gxf4 ♗h6 will win the f-pawn.

21...♖xe5 22 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 23 ♖e1 e6 24 h4

Or 24 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 25 g3 ♗d4, which ties White's pieces up prior to bringing the king in.

24...♖d5!



25 ♖e4

If 25 ♘c3 there follows 25...♖d2 26 ♖e2 ♖xe2 27 ♘xe2 ♗xb2+ etc.

25...♘e5 26 ♘f2 ♗f8! 27 c6 ♘xc6 28 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 29 ♖c4 ♖d4 30 ♖c3 ♖xh4 31 ♖xb3 ♘a5 32 ♖d3 ♖h2 33 ♖g3 ♔g7 34 ♘e4 ♔g6 35 b4 ♘c6 36 ♘c5 ♘d4 37 ♖g4 e5! 38 ♖e4 ♖xg2 39 ♖xe5 ♖xg5 40 ♖xg5+ ♔xg5 41 ♘xb7 ♔g4 0-1

The advance of Black's h-pawn will decide matters.

Summary

The lines in this chapter are still largely uncharted, with only 6...c5 7 d5 e6 being truly 'respectable'. I have my suspicions about the soundness of Wohl's treatment in Game 51 and the counterplay available from 5...g6. Both of these (plus 6...c5 7 d5 g6) require some homework to turn them into useful lines. On the other hand the amazing 5...g5 looks quite playable on the basis of existing evidence.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 ♘b6 5 f4 dxe5

5...♗f5 – *Game 49*

5...g5 – *Game 50*

5...c5 *(D)* – *Game 51*

5...g6 – *Game 52*

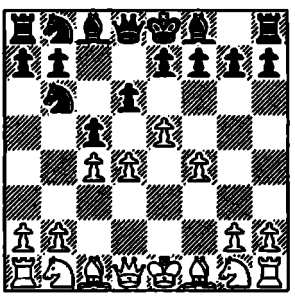
6 fxe5 c5 7 d5 *(D)* **e6**

7...g6 – Game 48

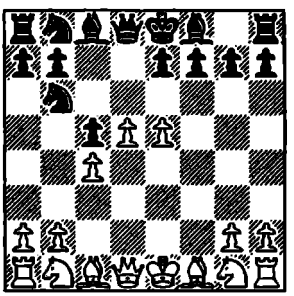
8 ♘c3 exd5 9 cxd5 c4 10 ♘f3

10 a3 – *Game 46*

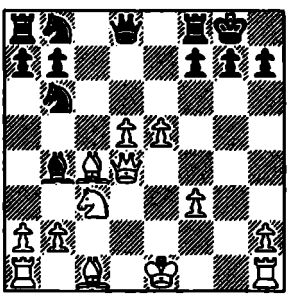
10...♗g4 11 ♕d4 ♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♗b4 13 ♗xc4 0-0 *(D)* – *Game 47*



5...c5



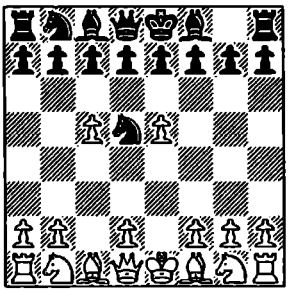
7 d5



13...0-0

CHAPTER NINE

The Chase Variation



1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 c4 ♘b6 4 c5 ♘d5

The Chase Variation, thus named for obvious reasons, is often chosen by players who like to force the pace early on. Well-known exponents of the white side include the strong grandmasters Sveshnikov and Thorhallsson, so it certainly deserves to be taken seriously as a white weapon.

Having driven Black's knight away from d5, White promptly sends it back again and argues that the pawn on c5 will have a cramping effect, if only temporarily. White sometimes gambits this pawn whilst continuing with his development. If he chooses to protect it with the move d2-d4, then Black should probably construct a plan to undermine it with ...the advance b7-b6 at some point.

The positions arising from the Chase Variation are very sharp and Black certainly needs to know what he's doing. My recommendation is to meet either 5 ♘c3 or 5 ♗c4 with 5...e6, as in Games 54 to 56.

Game 53
Thorhallsson-Gausel
Reykjavik 1997

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 c4 ♘b6 4 c5 ♘d5 5 ♘c3 ♘xc3

Another interesting possibility is 5...c6 6 ♗c4 (6 ♘xd5 cxd5 7 d4 d6 gives Black an easy game) 6...e6 which can also be reached via transposition from 5 ♗c4 c6 6 ♘c3 e6:

a) Black seems to be doing okay after 7 d4 b6 8 cxb6 axb6 9 ♘ge2 ♗a6 10 ♗b3 d6 11 ♘xd5; this was agreed drawn at this point in Rozentalis-Kengis, Daugavpils 1989.

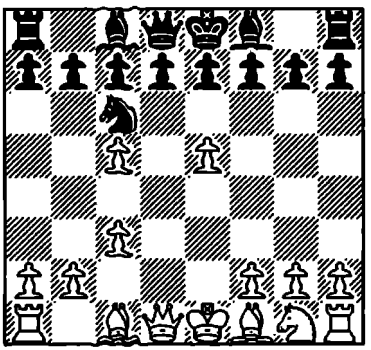
b) 7 ♘e4 b6 8 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 9 cxd6 0-0 10 d4 ♗a6 was also fine for Black in Szabolcsi-Knezevic, Budapest 1981.

c) Finally, 7 ♕g4 f5 8 ♕g3 b6 9 cxb6 axb6 10 ♘ge2 ♗a6 11 d3 ♕e7 12 0-0 ♕f7 also saw Black complete his development with a good game in Sveshnikov-Gluzman, Bern 1992.

6 dxc3 ♘c6

6...d5 7 cxd6 exd6 8 ♗f4 d5 9 ♗d3 is

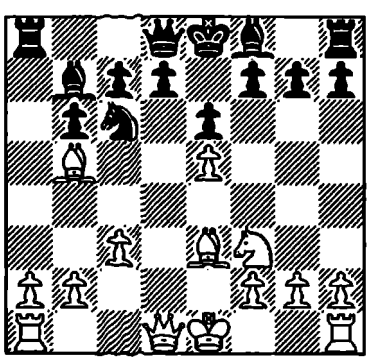
slightly better for White because of his lead in development. The text is Bagirov's idea.



7 ♘f3 e6 8 ♗e3 b6 9 ♗b5!?

This is probably the only move to give White some pressure. 9 ♕a4?! gave Black the initiative after 9...♗xc5 10 ♗xc5 bxc5 11 0-0-0 f6!? 12 ♗b5 ♘xe5 13 ♖he1 0-0 14 ♘xe5 fxe5 15 ♗xd7 ♕g5+ in Cappello-Bagirov, Tunis 1979, while after 9 cxb6 axb6 10 a3 f5!? 11 exf6 ♕xf6 12 ♗g5 ♕f7 13 ♗d3 ♗a6 14 c4 ♗d6 15 ♕c2 ♕h5 Black had a compact and well organised position in Fogarasi-Bagirov, Budapest 1989.

9...♗b7 10 cxb6 axb6



11 0-0

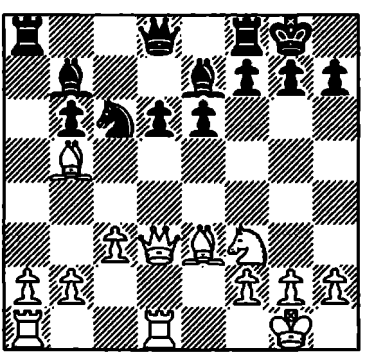
Trying to put pressure on the d-file with 11 ♕d2 achieved nothing after 11...♗e7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♖fd1 d6 14 exd6 cxd6 in Kalikova-Hallerova, Czech Women's Ch., Nymburk 1994.

11...♗e7 12 ♕d3!? 0-0

According to Finkel, the tempting 12...♘a7?! leaves Black with slightly the worse endgame after 13 ♗a4 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♘c6 15 ♗xc6 dxc6 16 ♕e4 ♕d5 17 ♖fd1 ♕xe4 18 fxe4, his problems stemming from the fact that he can't castle without allowing White's rook into d7.

13 ♖fd1 d5 14 exd6 cxd6

And not 14...♗xd6?! 15 ♘g5, which forces a serious weakening of Black's kingside. In the game too, White manages to bring some real pressure to bear.



15 ♕e4! ♕c7 16 ♕g4! ♖ad8 17 ♗d3 ♘e5

Black wisely tries to simplify the position before White's threats become too serious, though in this case he gets a different set of problems due to his inferior pawn structure.

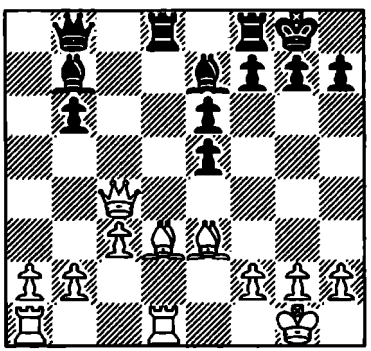
After 17...d5? White has 18 ♗h6 ♗f6 19 ♕h3!, when the mating threats (with 20 ♗xg7) would force Black to give up the exchange with 19...g6.

18 ♘xe5 dxe5 19 ♕c4!

Yet another queen move, but one which confirms White's advantage. White's 3-1 queenside majority would be a big factor in the endgame, not least because the mobility of Black's own majority has been hobbled by the doubled e-pawns.

19...♕b8!?

Giving up a pawn rather than exchange queens. The decision to play like this might have been motivated by practical considerations; White might have been running short of time and it would be easier for him to play the endgame.



20 ♗xb6 ♖c8 21 ♕b3 ♕a8 22 ♗f1 ♗c6 23 a4 h5 24 a5 h4 25 c4 f5!

The only chance to create a counterplay. Black should be losing with best play but the position still poses some practical difficulties.

26 ♕c3 ♖f6 27 ♕xe5! ♖g6 28 g3 ♖f8 29 ♗e3 ♕e8 30 ♗f4?!

Thus far White's play has been exemplary but this allows some counterplay. White should push his passed pawn with the cold-blooded 30 a6!.

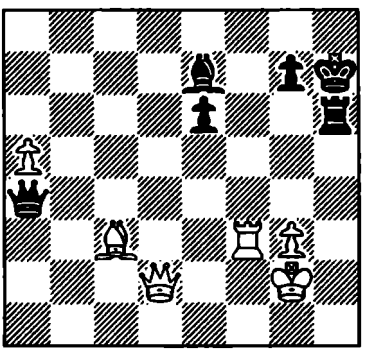
30...hxg3 31 fxg3 ♗f6 32 ♕c5 ♗xb2 33 ♗d6 ♗xa1 34 ♗xf8 ♗f6 35 ♗d6 ♖h6 36 ♗e2 ♗g5 37 ♖b1 ♔h7 38 ♗e5 ♗e4 39 ♖d1 ♗e7 40 ♕e3?!

After this Black is right back into it and the shock of the turnaround tells on White's nerves. He should play 40 ♕c7!, keeping Black tied up.

40...♕a4!

Suddenly threatening ...♗a8 followed by ...♕c6. White gives up a pawn to prevent this and suddenly he is equal at best.

41 ♗c3 ♗a8 42 ♖f1 ♕c6 43 ♗f3 ♕xc4 44 ♔g2 f4 45 ♕e1 fxg3 46 hxg3 ♕a2+ 47 ♕d2 ♗xf3+ 48 ♖xf3 ♕a4



49 ♕d3+

Probably missing the fact that Black can profitably use the h7-square. He should play the move 49 ♕d4 immediately, when the position is probably about equal.

49...♔g8 50 ♕d4 ♕c2+ 51 ♖f2 ♕h7! 52 ♕f4?! ♖h2+ 53 ♔g1 ♖h1+ 54 ♔g2 ♕h3+ 55 ♔f3 ♕h5+ 56 ♔g2 ♗c5!

Winning for Black.

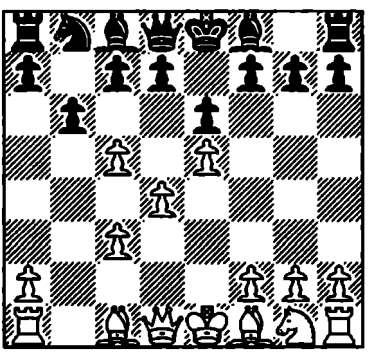
57 ♗d4 ♕h3+ 58 ♔f3 ♕h5+ 59 ♔g2 ♖d1! 60 ♖f1 ♖xf1 61 ♔xf1 ♕d1+ 62 ♔g2 ♕xd4 63 ♕b8+ ♔h7 64 ♕b1+ g6 65 ♕b7+ ♔h6 66 a6 0-1

Game 54
Sveshnikov-Solozhenkin
Russia 1998

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 c4 ♘b6 4 c5 ♘d5 5 ♘c3 e6 6 d4

The continuation of Oim-Mikenas, Palanga 1961 certainly deserves a mention. After 6 ♕g4 Black played 6...h5!? 7 ♕c4 d6! 8 cxd6 cxd6 9 ♘xd5 exd5 10 ♕xd5 ♘c6 11 ♗b5 ♗d7 12 exd6 ♖h6 13 ♗c4 ♖e6+ with excellent compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

6...♘xc3 7 bxc3 b6!



Once again this is a key move for Black. He undermines White's pawn structure and prepares to develop his queen's bishop via a6 or b7.

8 ♕g4

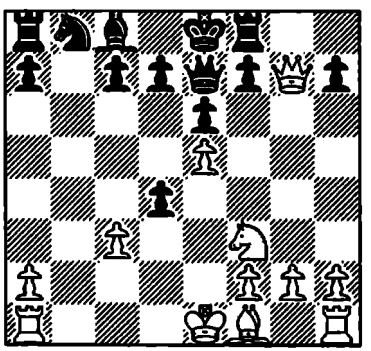
8 ♕f3!? is also interesting:

a) 8...c6?! 9 cxb6 axb6 10 ♘h3 ♗a6 11 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 12 0-0 b5 13 a4 was better for White in Mukhametov-Driamin, Moscow 1996.

b) Bowden-Murshed, London 1988 continued 8...♘c6 9 cxb6 cxb6 10 ♗d3 ♗b7 11 ♕g3! ♕c7 12 ♘e2 d6 13 ♗f4 and White had the better game.

Another possibility is 8 cxb6 axb6 9 ♗d3 (9 ♕g4?! c5 10 dxc5 ♕c7! 11 ♘f3 ♘a6 12 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 13 ♗e3 ♗xc5 was fine for Black in Lein-Zelcic, Belgrade 1988) 9...♗b7 10 ♘f3 d6 (10...♗e7 11 0-0 ½-½ was the end of the game Sveshnikov-Solozhenkin, Russian Ch., Elista 1996) 11 0-0 ♗e7 12 ♖e1 ♘d7 13 ♗c2 ♖a5 14 ♘d2 dxe5, which led to complex play in Sveshnikov-Morozevich, Alushta 1994.

8...bxc5 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♕xg7 ♖f8 12 ♘f3 cxd4



13 ♗e2

The impatient 13 ♘g5? is answered by 13...♕a3! 14 ♘e4 ♗b7 15 ♘f6+ ♔e7, when Black's threats prove to be far more serious.

13...f5!

Improving on 13...f6 14 ♕g3 d3 15 ♗xd3 f5 16 ♖b1 ♘a6 17 ♘d4 ♘c5 18 ♕f3! c6 19 0-0, which left Black with some problems to solve in Sveshnikov-Basagic, Ljubljana 1997.

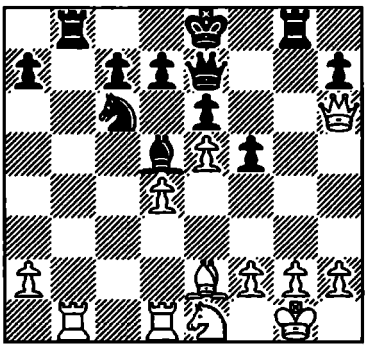
14 ♕h6

Keeping queens on the board is the only way to trouble Black; 14 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 15 ♘xd4 ♗b7 is equal. Now White threatens 15 ♘g5, so there's no time to capture on c3.

14...♖g8 15 0-0 ♗b7

Wisely continuing with his development. After 15...dxc3 White can play 16 ♖ab1, which prevents the development of the bishop.

16 cxd4 ♗d5 17 ♖fd1 ♘c6 18 ♘e1 ♖b8 19 ♖ab1



19...♖b6

Once again Black must consolidate. Although his position is structurally quite nice, the position of his king gives constant cause for concern. 19...♖xb1? 20 ♖xb1 ♗xa2 would be tantamount to suicide after 21 ♖b7 ♔d8 22 ♗b5! etc.

20 a4 ♔d8 21 ♕d2 ♕a3 22 ♕h6 ♕e7 23 ♖b5 ♕g7

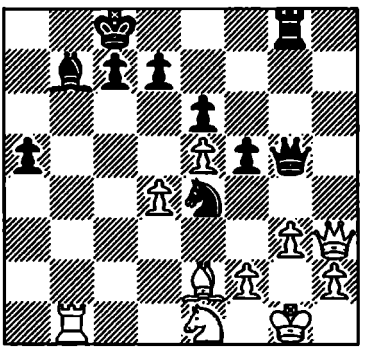
Finkel suggested 23...♗b3, going after White's a-pawn.

24 ♕h3 ♘e7 25 ♖db1 ♗c6 26 ♖xb6 axb6 27 a5 ♘d5 28 ♗f3 ♕g5

And not 28...bxa5? because of 29 ♖b8+ ♔e7 30 ♕h4+ ♕g5 31 ♕xh7+ ♖g7 32 ♕h8 etc.

29 g3 ♘c3 30 ♖a1 ♘e4 31 ♕xh7 bxa5 32 ♖b1 ♔c8 33 ♗e2 ♗b7 34 ♕h3?

A blunder in time-trouble. The correct move was 34 ♘f3!, after which 34...♕g7?! 35 ♕xg7 ♖xg7 36 ♖b3! (preventing ...♘c3) 36...a4 37 ♖a3 ♗c6 38 ♗d1 wins the a-pawn and gives White problematic winning chances. 34...♕d8 is probably the best, though Black still has cause for concern over the position of his king.



34...♘c3!

Completely turning the tables.

35 ♖xb7

After 35 ♖b2 there is 35...♕c1!.

35...♘xe2+ 36 ♔f1 ♔xb7 37 ♕g2+ c6 38 ♔xe2 ♕g4+ 39 ♘f3 ♕e4+ 40 ♔d2 ♕d5 41 ♕h1 ♕a2+ 42 ♔e3 ♕b3+ 43 ♔e2 ♕b2+ 44 ♔d3 a4 45 ♕d1 a3 46 ♕c2 ♕b5+ 47 ♔c3 ♖a8 48 ♕a2 ♕d5 49 ♕b1+ ♔c7 50 ♘d2 a2 0-1

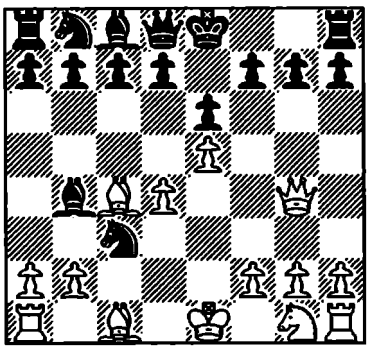
Game 55
Posch-Baburin
Vienna 1995

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 c4 ♘b6 4 c5 ♘d5 5 ♗c4 e6 6 ♘c3

6 ♕g4 was tried in Radojevic-Bagirov, Trinec 1973, with Black winning quickly after 6...♘b4 7 ♘a3 b6 8 d4 ♗a6 9 ♕e4 ♘8c6 10 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 11 ♕d3? (11 cxb6 is good for Black but not fatal) 11...♘ab4 12 ♕c4 bxc5 13 dxc5 ♘xe5 0-1.

6...♘xc3

There are two other interesting lines:
a) 6...♗xc5!? 7 d4 ♗b4 8 ♕g4 ♘xc3



a1) 9 a3 ♗f8 10 ♗g5 (10 bxc3!? – Sveshnikov) 10...h5 11 ♕f4 ♘d5 12 ♗xd5 ♗e7 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 looks like rather nebulous compensation for the pawn.

a2) 9 bxc3 9...♗xc3+ 10 ♔f1 ♕e7 11 ♖b1 (11 ♕xg7 ♕f8 12 ♕f6 ♖g8 also leaves White struggling) 11...f5 12 ♕h5+ g6 13 ♕d1 ♘c6 and White's compensation was inadequate in Sveshnikov-Khmelnitsky, Sibenik 1990.

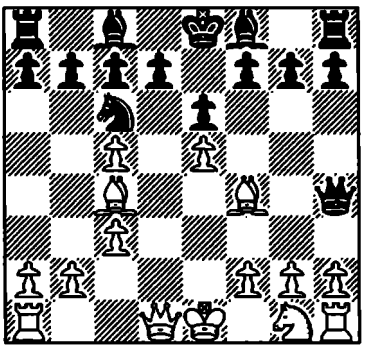
b) 6...♘c6 7 d4 ♘xc3 8 bxc3 d6 9 cxd6 cxd6 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 0-0 e5 was also fine for Black in Vavra-Pacl, Czech Team Ch. 1992.

7 dxc3 ♘c6

7...♗xc5 8 ♕g4! gives White a dangerous initiative for the sacrificed pawn. After 7...♘c6 Black can meet 8 ♘f3 with 8...♗xc5 because ♕g4 has been ruled out.

8 ♗f4 ♕h4!?

An interesting idea of Mihai Suba which comes close to winning a pawn by force. Can White hang on to it or, if not, demonstrate sufficient compensation?



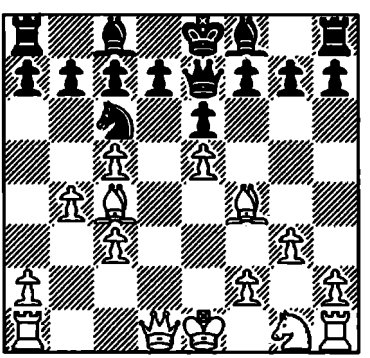
9 g3

9 ♕d2 ♘xe5! 10 ♗e2 ♘g6 11 ♗xc7 ♗xc5 12 ♗g3 ♕a4 also left White with insufficient compensation in Angelov-Suba, Varna 1975.

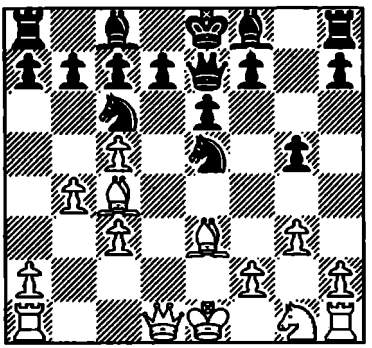
9...♕e7 10 b4

After 10 ♕e2 Black obtained the better game with 10...g5! (10...♕xc5 also leaves me wondering if White can possibly have enough) 11 ♗d2 ♕xc5 12 ♗xg5 ♕xe5 13 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗f6 ♘xc4 15 ♗xh8 ♘xb2 in Holzl-Speelman, Hastings 1971/72.

10 ♘f3 h6 11 ♗e3 b6 12 cxb6 axb6 13 ♕e2 ♗b7 14 0-0?! (14 0-0-0!?) 14...g5! was also very promising for Black in Hegedus-Grunberg, Romanian Ch., Bucharest 1985.



10...g5 11 ♗e3 ♘xe5



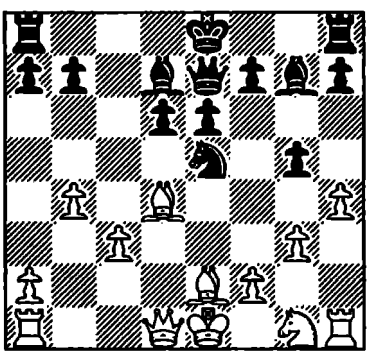
12 ♗d4!?

An interesting attempt to breathe new life into White's position. 12 ♕h5 ♗g7! 13 ♗xg5 ♗f6 14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 15 ♕e2 ♘xc4 16 ♕xc4 b5! 17 ♕d4 ♕xd4 18 cxd4 ♗b7 19 f3 a5! gave Black a huge endgame advantage in Schwarts-Solozhenkin, New York,1994.

12...♗g7 13 ♗e2 d6 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 h4

15 f4? is wrong because of 15...gxf4 16 gxf4 ♕h4+ etc.

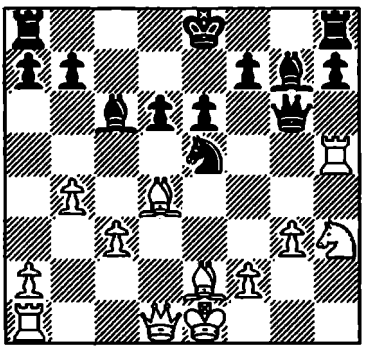
15...♗d7



16 hxg5!

16 f4?! still doesn't work, this time because of 16...gxf4 17 gxf4 ♗c6 18 ♖h3 0-0-0 19 ♕c2 ♗f6 20 fxe5 ♗xh4+ 21 ♗f2 ♗xf2+ 22 ♔xf2 dxe5 with three pawns for the piece and an exposed white king to aim at.

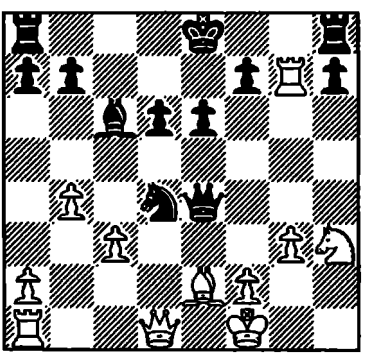
16...♕xg5 17 ♖h5 ♕g6 18 ♘h3! ♗c6



19 ♖g5?

So far White has played very well, but this is a mistake. He should play 19 ♘f4! ♕e4 20 ♔f1! (threatening 21 f3 ♘xf3 22 ♗d3) 20...h6 21 f3, after which the forced retreat with 21...♕h7 leaves White with definite compensation.

19...♕e4 20 ♖xg7 ♘f3+ 21 ♔f1 ♘h2+ 22 ♔e1 ♘f3+ 23 ♔f1 ♘xd4



24 f3

This leaves White two pawns down without anything to show for them. But 24 ♕xd4 is hardly attractive as after

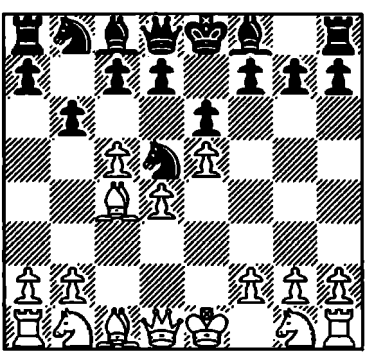
24...♕h1+! 25 ♘g1 ♗g2+ 26 ♔e1 ♕xg1+ 27 ♔d2 ♕xa1 he loses most of his pieces.

24...♘xf3 25 ♔f2 ♘e5 26 ♘f4 0-0-0 27 b5 ♗e8 28 ♖b1 d5 29 ♖b4 ♘c4 30 ♕a4 ♔b8 31 ♗f3 ♕e3+ 32 ♔g2 ♕xc3 33 ♘xe6 ♖c8! 34 ♗xd5 ♕d2+ 0-1

Game 56
Potkin-Neverov
St Petersburg 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 c4 ♘b6 4 c5 ♘d5 5 ♗c4 e6 6 d4 b6!?

Another possibility is 6...d6, which actually transposes into a 2 c3 Sicilian after 7 cxd6 cxd6.



7 cxb6

White has also played 7 ♕g4 bxc5 8 ♗xd5 exd5 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♕xg7 ♕f8 12 ♕f6 (Longschmidt-Zeh, correspondence 1988) and now Burgess's suggestion of 12...♖g8 looks very good for Black.

7...axb6 8 ♘e2

White played 8 ♘f3 in Machulsky-Gurgenidze, USSR 1973, but failed to obtain any advantage after 8...♗a6! 9 ♗xa6 (9 ♘bd2 ♗b4 10 0-0 ♗xd2 11 ♘xd2 0-0 looks fine for Black) 9...♘xa6 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♘c3 ♘ab4 12 a3 0-0 13 ♘e4 f5 14 ♘c3 c6 15 ♗d2 ♘a6 16 ♘xd5 exd5 17 ♕c1 ♘c7; Black's knight is coming to the 'dream' e6-square which makes his position super-solid.

Neither 8 ♕g4 f5 nor 8 ♘c3 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 d5! 10 ♗d3 ♗a6 (Machulsky-Bagirov, Kirovabad 1973) promise White anything.

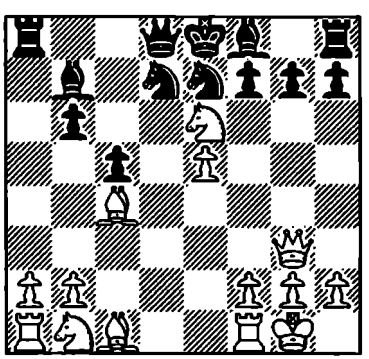
8...d6

Black has also played 8...♗a6, after which Semeniuk-Mikhalchishin, Cheliabinsk 1975 continued 9 ♗xd5!? exd5 10 ♘bc3 c6 11 0-0 ♗e7 12 ♖e1 (12 f4!? f5 13 g4 fxg4 14 ♖f2, intending ♘g3 and f4-f5, is worth a second look) 12...0-0 13 ♘g3 d6 14 f4 f5 with a good game for Black.

9 0-0 ♗b7 10 ♕b3 dxe5 11 dxe5 ♘d7 12 ♕g3

Making it difficult for Black to develop his kingside. Black tries to solve the problem by re-routing a knight to f5 although this costs valuable time.

12...♘e7 13 ♘d4 c5 14 ♘xe6!?

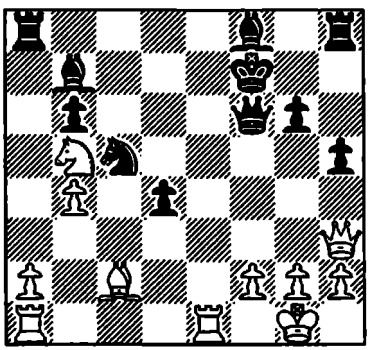


One of those infamous positional piece sacrifices. White gets two pawns and Black's king is stuck in the centre. Enough compensation? Who knows?

14...fxe6 15 ♗xe6 ♘c6 16 ♗e3 ♕e7 17 ♕h3 ♘d4 18 ♗xd4 cxd4 19 ♘a3! ♘c5 20 ♗g4 h5 21 ♗f5 ♔f7 22 ♘b5 ♕xe5 23 ♖fe1 ♕f6

23...♖xa2!? was possible but then 24 ♖ac1! would continue the attack.

24 b4 g6 25 ♗c2



25...d3?

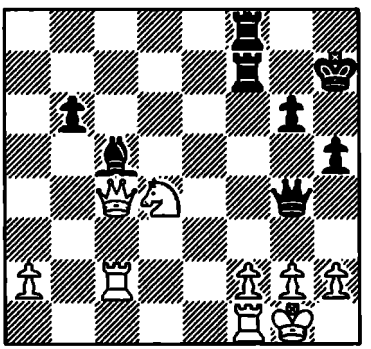
Perhaps Volzhin's suggestion of 25...♗c8! 26 ♕g3 ♘e6 would have been better, though in this case too Black's king is far from safe.

26 bxc5 dxc2 27 ♕d7+ ♔g8 28 ♕xb7 ♖d8 29 ♖ac1

According to Volzhin, another interesting possibility was 29 ♘d6!?, after which 29...♗xd6 (29...bxc5 30 ♕b3+ ♔h7 31 ♘e4) 30 cxd6 ♕xd6 31 ♖ac1 ♖h7 32 ♕e4 recovers the c2-pawn with Black's king still exposed.

29 ♕xb6? was bad because of 29...♕xa1!.

29...♗xc5 30 ♖xc2 ♖h7! 31 ♕e4 ♖f7 32 ♕e2 ♖df8 33 ♖f1 ♕g5 34 ♕c4 ♔h7 35 ♘d4 ♕g4!



36 ♘e6??

A blunder in mutual time trouble. After the superior 36 ♘f3! ♖f4 (and not 36...♖xf3 37 ♕xg4 ♖xf2 because of 38 ♖fxf2! hxg4 39 ♖xc5 ♖xf2 40 ♖c7+ etc.) 37 ♕e6! ♖8f6 38 ♕xg4 hxg4 39 ♘e5 ♖d6 a draw is the most likely outcome, Black's pressure against f2 compensating for the pawn.

36...♖xf2! 37 ♘xf8+ ♖xf8+ 38 ♖ff2 ♕xc4 0-1

Summary

The Chase Variation offers Black his fair share of the play in a sharp and uncompromising struggle. The plan of 5...e6 (after either 5 ♘c3 or 5 ♗c4) followed, if necessary, by ...b7-b6, is both sound and economical. But there are some specifics to be learned here too.

Black should probably pay close attention to Sveshnikov-Solozhenkin and White's alternative of 8 ♕f3. And instead of following the 8...d6 of Potkin-Neverov, I suspect that 8...♗a6 is more promising.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 c4 ♘b6 4 c5 ♘d5 5 ♗c4 *(D)*

5 ♘c3

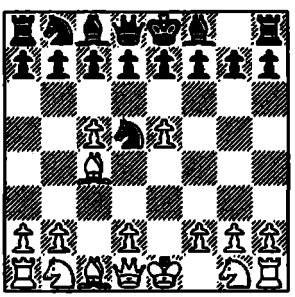
5...♘xc3 6 dxc3 ♘c6 7 ♘f3 *(D)* – *Game 53*

5...e6 6 d4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 b6 – *Game 54*

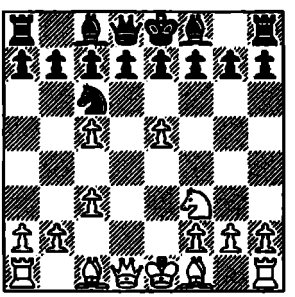
5...e6 6 d4

6 ♘c3 – *Game 55*

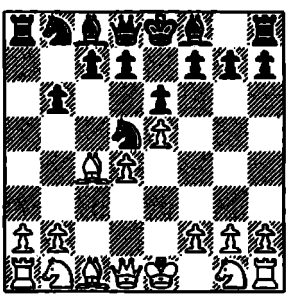
6...b6 7 cxb6 axb6 *(D)* – *Game 56*



5 ♗c4



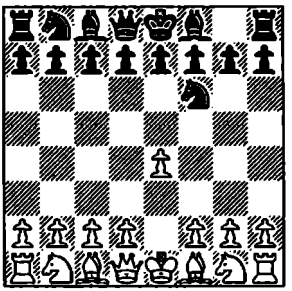
7 ♘f3



7...axb6

CHAPTER TEN

Other Lines



1 e4 ♘f6

The final chapter is devoted to a variety of unusual systems that have had occasional bouts of popularity before slipping back into the footnotes. None of these lines seems, in principle, to offer White a lasting initiative, but the element of surprise is likely to be quite dangerous.

Game 57 features 4 f4, which is an interesting attempt to play a kind of Four Pawns Attack but without having committed the c-pawn as yet. The notes to this game include other unusual 4th move alternatives such as Romanishin's 4 ♗e2 and 4 ♗c4 (as formerly played by Sax). All of these require accurate handling but the current theoretical verdict is that they are harmless if met correctly.

In Game 58 we see 3...♘b6, an unusual line that Westerinen has been playing. Games 59 and 60 illustrate the old Keres speciality of 3 ♘c3, which is actually quite a reasonable line that requires accurate handling from Black. White has a slightly damaged pawn structure but obtains open lines for his pieces.

Rozentalis has tried 3 ♘c3 but more recently he has played 3 g3 (Game 61). Black needs to play purposefully to avoid being slightly worse, but a kingside fianchetto looks like a perfectly good plan.

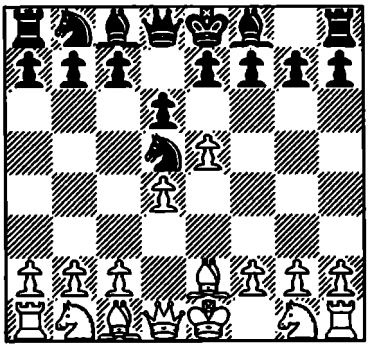
Last, but not least, we come to 2 ♘c3, which has proven quite irritating for many Alekhine players. The standard 2...d5 has come under severe pressure because of the ingenious improvements thought up by the Swedish GM Hector, and his victims in this line include Alekhine specialists such as Kengis.

Game 57
Njobvu-Wohl
Yerevan Olympiad 1996

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 f4

One of several interesting fourth move alternatives. Here's a round-up of some of the other possibilities:

a) 4 ♗e2



4...dxe5 5 dxe5 ♗f5 6 c3 e6 7 ♘f3 ♘d7 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 a3 0-0 10 h3 a5 11 c4 ♘5b6 saw Black generating some interesting play on the queenside in Waller-Mohr, Bled 1992.

b) After 4 ♗c4 most Alekhine specialists like 4...♘b6 5 ♗b3 ♗f5 and now:

b1) 6 e6?! ♗xe6 7 ♗xe6 fxe6 8 ♘f3 ♘c6 9 0-0 ♕d7 10 ♘g5 g6 11 ♕f3 ♘d8 left White struggling to justify the pawn sacrifice in D.Gross-Zvolanek, Czech Ch., Luhacovice 1973.

b2) 6 ♕f3 is met by 6...♕c8, though sacrificing a pawn with 6...e6!? 7 ♕xb7 d5 is also interesting, one point being that 8 ♘e2 ♗b4+ 9 c3? can be met by 9...♗d3! and 10...♗a6, trapping White's queen.

c) 4 ♗g5 was played in one of Alekhine's own games, Steiner-Alekhine, Budapest 1921. Black gained the advantage with 4...dxe5 5 dxe5 ♘c6 6 ♗b5 (6 ♘f3 ♗g4 7 ♗b5 h6 8 ♗d2 e6 was fine for Black in Lutikov-Kopylov, correspondence 1968) 6...♗f5 7 ♘f3 ♘db4 8 ♘a3 ♕xd1+ 9 ♖xd1 ♘xc2+ 10 ♘xc2 ♗xc2 11 ♖c1 ♗e4 12 ♘d4 ♗xg2 13 ♖g1 0-0-0! etc.

4...c5!?

A highly unusual and experimental treatment. A more solid way to play against this line is with 4...dxe5 5 fxe5 c5 (or 5...♗f5!?) and now:

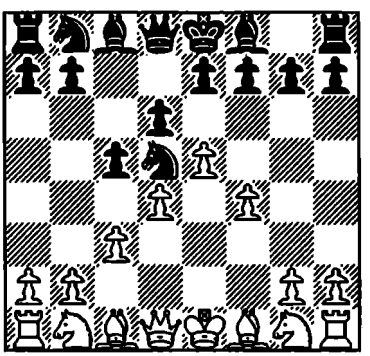
a) 6 c4 ♘b4! 7 d5 ♗f5 8 ♘a3 e6 is very unpleasant for White.

b) 6 ♘f3 cxd4 7 ♕xd4 ♘c6 8 ♗b5 and now Kengis has suggested 8...♗f5, intending 9...e6. This seems to be quite comfortable for Black.

5 c3?!

After 5 dxc5 dxe5 6 fxe5 e6 Black already has an excellent game and threatens 7...♕h4+.

White can also try to transpose into Wohl's line against the Four Pawns Attack with 5 c4 after which 5...♘b4!? (5...♘b6 transposes into Mamadshoev-Wohl) is the only move with independent significance. Mutzner-Varga, Mendrisio 1999 continued 6 a3 ♘4c6 7 d5 ♘d4 8 ♗d3! (8 ♘f3 is strongly met by 8...♗g4) 8...e6 9 ♘c3 exd5 10 cxd5 ♕h4+ 11 g3 ♕g4 12 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 13 h3 ♗f5 14 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 15 ♔f2 and White was better, though he lost because of later errors.



5...♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♗g4 7 ♗b5?! cxd4 8 cxd4

8 ♕xd4 ♗xf3 9 gxf3 e6 is also good

for Black.

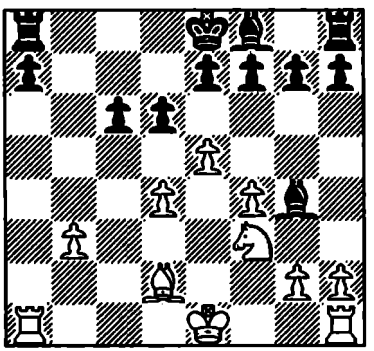
8...♕a5+ 9 ♘c3 ♘xc3 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 bxc3?

White had to play 11 ♕d2, after which 11...♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♕d5 13 ♕xc3 e6 is good for Black but a long way from decisive.

11...♕xc3+ 12 ♗d2 ♕d3

12...♗xf3! was simpler.

13 ♕b3! ♕xb3 14 axb3



14...♗xf3?

And now it becomes very difficult for Black to achieve the win. 14...♗e6!, intending ...♗d5, would keep Black's advantage.

15 gxf3 e6 16 ♖a6! dxe5 17 dxe5 ♔d7 18 ♔e2?

Missing his chance to save the game. 18 ♗e3 would prevent Black's next move and lead to a draw after 18...♗b4+ 19 ♔e2 ♔c7 20 ♖ha1.

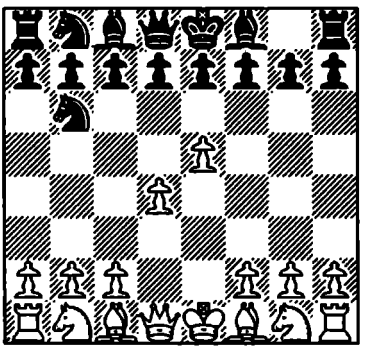
18...♗c5! 19 ♖d1 ♔c7 20 b4 ♗b6 21 ♗e3 ♔b7 22 ♖aa1 ♖ad8

Finally I can say that it's a matter of technique.

23 ♗c5 ♖d5 24 ♗d6 h5 25 ♖xd5 cxd5 26 ♗c5 ♖c8 27 ♖c1 ♔a6 28 ♔d3 ♔b5 29 ♔d4 a5 30 ♖b1 a4 31 ♖b2 a3 32 ♖c2 ♖a8 33 ♖c1 a2 34 ♖a1 ♗xc5+ 35 bxc5 ♖a4+ 0-1

Game 58
Stefansson-Westerinen
Reykjavik 1997

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 ♘b6!?



Westerinen plays this quite often and quite successfully. Black's position is actually reasonably solid; combine this with the provocative appearance of 3...♘b6 and it can be quite effective in practice.

4 a4

Another Westerinen game went 4 ♘f3 d5 5 ♗d3 ♗g4 6 h3 ♗xf3 (and not 6...♗h5? 7 e6 fxe6 8 g4) 7 ♕xf3 e6 8 0-0 c5 9 c3 when White could claim to be slightly better, Bjarnason-Westerinen, Torshavn 1997.

4...a5 5 ♘f3

White could also try 5 ♗d3, intending to avoid a pin on his knight after 5...d5 6 ♘e2, though with the bishop on the unusual d3-square Black could also consider 5...d6.

A further possibility is 5 ♗b5!? c6 6 ♗d3 d5 (6...g6 is more flexible, maintaining the option of either ...d6 or ...d5) 7 ♗g5!? g6 8 h4 h6 9 ♗e3 ♗g7 10 ♘d2 ♘a6 11 c3 ♗e6 12 ♘h3, when White

had dangerous attacking chances in Tal-Lutikov, USSR Ch. 1969.

5...d5 6 ♗d3

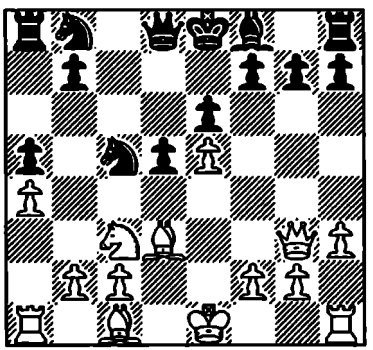
Or 6 ♗e2 ♗f5 (6...♗g4 is also possible) 7 0-0 e6 8 b3 ♘a6 9 ♘a3 ♗e7 10 ♗d2 ♘b4 11 ♗b5+ c6 12 ♗e2 0-0 13 c3 ♘a6 with an unclear position, Sariego-Arencibia, Linares 1992.

6...♗g4 7 h3 ♗xf3

And not 7...♗h5 because of 8 e6.

8 ♕xf3 e6 9 ♕g3 c5 10 dxc5 ♘6d7 11 ♘c3 ♘xc5!?

11...♘c6 12 ♘b5!? ♘dxe5 13 ♗f4 f6 14 0-0-0! ♕d7 15 ♗e3 ♖c8 16 ♗e2 ♕f7 17 f4 ♘d7 18 ♖he1 gave White strong pressure in Benjamin-Alburt, New York 1990.



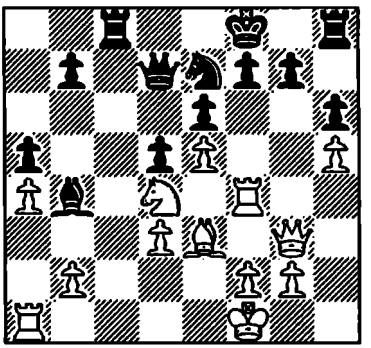
12 ♘b5?!

Giving Black an important tempo for development. According to Volzhin, White should first play 12 0-0, after which 12...♘c6 (or 12...♘xd3 13 cxd3 ♘c6 14 ♘b5) 13 ♘b5 ♖c8 14 ♗f4 leaves Black wondering how to complete his kingside development.

12...♘xd3+ 13 cxd3 ♗b4+ 14 ♔f1 ♔f8 15 h4!?

White still has some kingside pressure, but now his loss of castling rights gives Black chances.

15...♘c6 16 h5 h6 17 ♖h4 ♘e7 18 ♖f4 ♕d7 19 ♘d4 ♖c8 20 ♗e3



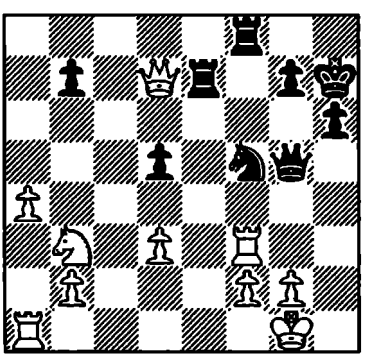
20...♘c6 21 ♘f3 ♔g8 22 ♖g4 ♗f8 23 ♗b6!?

White manages to win the a5-pawn but in doing so he loses both time and piece co-ordination.

23...♔h7 24 ♘d2 ♘e7 25 ♗xa5 ♘f5 26 ♕f3 ♗e7 27 ♘b3 ♖hf8 28 ♗c3 f6 29 ♕e2 fxe5 30 ♗xe5 ♗f6 31 ♔g1 ♕f7 32 ♖f4 ♗xe5 33 ♕xe5 ♕xh5 34 ♕xe6?

Maintaining the extra pawn, but now White's king comes under attack. White should centralise his knight with 34 ♘d4!.

34...♕g5! 35 ♖f3 ♖ce8 36 ♕d7 ♖e7



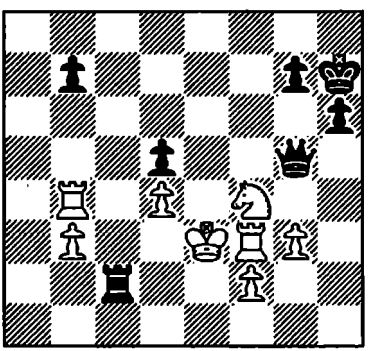
37 ♕b5?!

Probably the losing move. White has to play 37 ♕xd5, after which 37...♘h4 38 ♕xg5 ♘xf3+ 39 gxf3 hxg5 would leave him with drawing chances in the endgame.

37...♘d6! 38 ♖xf8 ♘xb5 39 axb5 ♕e5 40 d4 ♕e2 41 ♖f3 ♕xb5

The technical stage is fairly straightforward; Black combines threats against White's king and weak pawns which eventually proves too much for the defence.

42 ♖a5 ♖e1+ 43 ♔h2 ♕d7 44 ♖a1 ♕c7+ 45 g3 ♖e2 46 ♘c5 ♕b6 47 b3 ♕b4! 48 ♖a4 ♕e1 49 ♔g2 ♕b1 50 ♖b4 ♖e1 51 ♖e3 ♖g1+ 52 ♔f3 ♕f5+ 53 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 54 ♖f3 ♖c1 55 ♘d3 ♖c2+ 56 ♔e3 ♕g5+ 57 ♘f4

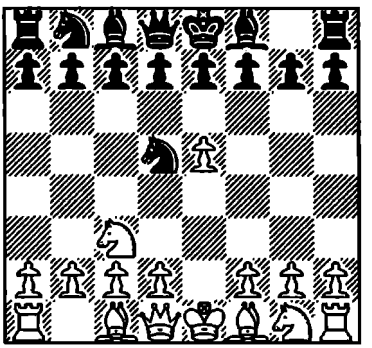


57...♕e7+ 58 ♔d3 ♕e4 mate

Game 59
Rozentalis-Volzhin
Polish Team Ch., Zakopane 2000

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 ♘c3

An old line favoured by Paul Keres: 'I know that the theoreticians consider this move of little interest and not dangerous for Black, but his position is by no means without problems.'



3...♘xc3

Black has also tried 3...e6 4 ♘xd5 (after which 4...exd5 5 ♕f3 may be White's best) and even 3...♘b6!?. But capturing on c3 has to be the critical line.

4 dxc3

White captures 'away from the centre' in order to obtain free piece play, but it is not the only move. The game Yudasin-Ehlvest, Biel Interzonal 1993 was a recent, high-level example of 4 bxc3 which continued 4...c5 5 f4 ♘c6 6 d4 (6 ♘f3 d5 7 d3 was mentioned by Yudasin as another possible set-up for White) 6...d5 7 ♘f3 ♗g4 8 ♗e2 e6 (8...♕a5?! 9 0-0 ♕xc3 10 ♗d2 ♕a3 11 ♖b1 gives White the initiative for his pawn) 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 h3 ♗h5 11 ♖b1; now Black should probably play 11...♕d7 in order to lend better support to f5 with a double-edged struggle in prospect. In the game he played 11...♕c7 but after 12 ♗e3 c4 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♘e1 faced the unpleasant threat of 15 f5.

4...d6 5 ♘f3

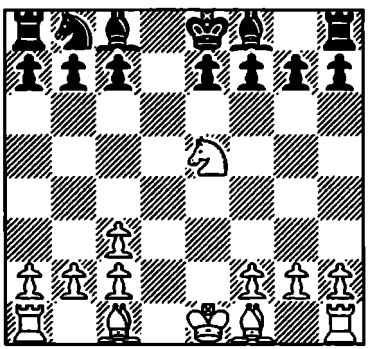
5 ♗c4 is well met by 5...♘c6! 6 ♘f3 dxe5! 7 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 8 ♘xe5 f6 9 ♘d3 e5 10 0-0 ♗e6 11 ♗b3 ♗d6 12 ♖e1 g5

13 ♗e3 ♔f7 14 f3 ♘c6, which proved to be clearly better for Black in Nezhmetdinov-Spassky, USSR 1959. He has safely completed his development and maintains a kingside pawn majority.

5...dxe5

For 5...♘c6 see the next game, Toothill-Davies.

6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7 ♘xe5 ♔e8



Arriving at a critical position. Black has a sound kingside pawn majority, whilst White's queenside majority is difficult to use because of the doubled pawn. On the other hand Black has not yet castled and it might be difficult for him to co-ordinate his pieces.

8 ♗b5+!?

A clever wrinkle which requires accurate defence from Black.

8 ♗c4 has long been known to give White absolutely nothing: 8...e6 9 ♗f4 ♗d6 10 0-0-0 ♘d7 11 ♖he1 was Pfleger-Schmidt, Polanica Zdroj 1971, and now 11...♔e7! would have been fine for Black (11...♘xe5 12 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♖xe5 ♔e7 14 ♖c5 was slightly better for White in the game).

8 ♗e3 doesn't give White anything either after 8...♘d7! (less common but stronger than 8...f6) 9 ♘f3, and now Volzhin's sensible suggestion of 9...e6 intending ...♗c5 or ...♗d6 gives Black very comfortable equality.

8...♗d7!

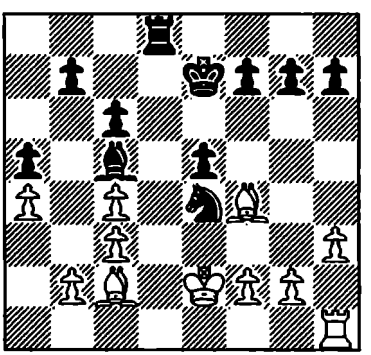
White's idea was that after 8...c6? it would be difficult for Black to complete his development – if he later moves his e-pawn the d6-square becomes very weak. A sample line is 9 ♗c4 e6 10 ♗f4 ♗d6 11 0-0-0 ♔e7 12 ♖xd6! etc.

8...♘d7 is also difficult for Black after 9 ♗f4 c6 10 ♗c4 (and not 10 ♘xc6? a6! 11 ♗a4 ♘c5!) 10...♘xe5 11 ♗xe5 f6 12 ♗g3 e5 13 0-0-0; White will be able to open up Black's king with f2-f4.

9 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 10 ♗f4 c6 11 ♗e2 e6 12 c4 ♗c5 13 c3 ♔e7 14 ♖d1

The immediate 14 b4 ♗d6 is okay for Black, but now b2-b4 is a threat.

14...a5 15 ♗d3 ♖hd8 16 ♔e2 ♘f6 17 h3 ♖d7 18 a4 ♖ad8 19 ♗c2 ♖xd1 20 ♗xd1 ♘e4 21 ♗c2 e5!



And not 21...♘xf2?? 22 ♖f1, winning the knight.

22 ♗c1

Keeping the game going. 22 ♗xe4 exf4 would be completely drawn.

22...♘d6 23 ♗d3 h6 24 f3 f5 25 ♖d1 ♖f8 26 b3 ♖f6 27 ♗c2 e4 28

♗f4 ½-½

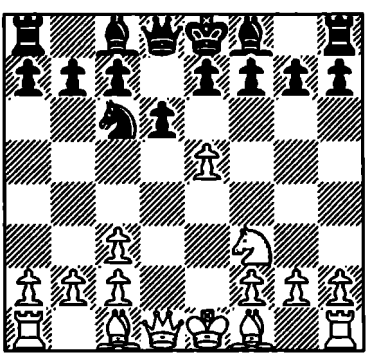
After 28 ♗f4 g5 29 ♗xd6+ ♖xd6 30 ♖xd6 ♔xd6 31 fxe4 f4!? there is nothing left to play for.

Game 60
Toothill-Davies
British League 2001

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 ♘c3 ♘xc3 4 dxc3 d6

I'm not sure I particularly like 4...d5, despite its solid theoretical reputation. After 5 ♕f3 White's queen comes to g3 and makes life uncomfortable. A recent game Hector-Jessen, Copenhagen 2000 went 5...g6 6 ♗d3 ♗g7 7 ♕g3 c5 8 ♘f3 ♘c6 and now 9 ♗f4 (Hector castled short at this point) 9...c4 10 ♗e2 ♗f5 11 0-0-0 looks quite good.

5 ♘f3 ♘c6



6 ♗f4?!

After the normal 6 ♗b5 I was intending 6...g6 (6...♗d7 7 ♕e2 is known to be uncomfortable for Black) 7 ♗f4 ♗g7, but then 8 exd6 cxd6 9 ♕d2 followed by castling long gives White interesting play. Black's central pawn majority will find it difficult to advance whilst White's king will be well protected by the doubled c3-pawn. It blocks both the c-file and the h8-a1 diagonal.

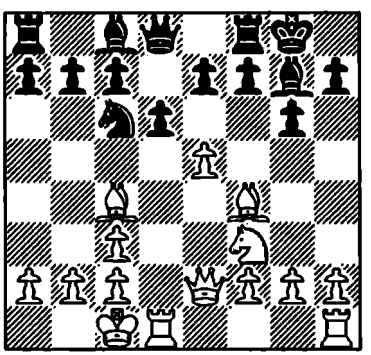
6...g6

In the light of experience I prefer 6...dxe5 7 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 8 ♗xe5 (8 ♘xe5 f6, followed by ...e7-e5, is fine for Black) 8...c6, with the game L.Hübner-Baburin, Berlin 1992 continuing 9 0-0-0 f6 10 ♗c7 ♗g4 11 ♗c4 e5 12 ♖he1 ♗e7 13 ♖d2 ♘e6 and now White sacrificed unsoundly with 14 ♘xe5.

7 ♗c4 ♗g7 8 ♕e2

A few White players have been tempted by 8 ♘g5, not knowing that 8...dxe5 9 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 10 ♕f3 exf4 11 ♖d1 ♕xd1+ 12 ♕xd1 h6 just wins for Black as in Payrhuber-Ligterink, World Junior Ch., Stockholm 1969.

8...0-0 9 0-0-0



9...♗g4

According to my database this natural move is new. Previously Black had played odd moves such as 9...♕d7 and 9...♕e8.

10 e6 fxe6 11 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 12 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 13 ♗g5 ♕c8 14 ♖de1 ♕xe6 15 ♖xe6 ♖f7 16 ♖he1 h6!?

An interesting pawn sacrifice.

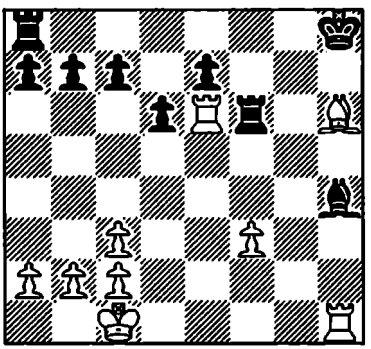
17 ♗d2

After 17 ♗xe7 I intended 17...g5, leaving White's bishop stranded on e7.

17...g5 18 h4 g4 19 ♘d4

I felt that 19 ♘h2 ♘e5 20 ♗xh6 ♗xh6+ 21 ♖xh6+ ♔g7 22 ♖e6 ♖h8 would have given Black more than enough compensation.

19...♘e5 20 f4 gxf3 21 ♘xf3 ♘xf3 22 gxf3 ♗f6 23 ♗xh6 ♗xh4 24 ♖h1 ♖f6



25 ♖xf6

The spectacular 25 ♗g7+ is refuted by 25...♔xg7 26 ♖xe7+ ♔f8 27 ♖xc7 ♖h6, threatening ...♗g5+.

25...♗xf6 26 ♖g1 ♖g8 27 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 28 ♔d2 ♔f7 29 b3 ♔g6 30 ♗e3 ♗g5?!

30...a6 would have been better, when Black still has some chances.

31 f4 ♗h6 32 ♗xa7 ♔f5 33 ♔d3 ♗xf4 34 a4 e5 35 c4 e4+ 36 ♔e2 c5 37 ♗b6 ♔e5 38 ♗a5 ♔f5 39 ♗e1 ♔e6 40 ♗f2 ♗e5 41 ♗e1 d5 42 cxd5+ ♔xd5 43 c3 ♗f6 ½-½

Game 61
Petrik-Bogdanovski
European Club Cup, Heraklio 1997

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 g3!?

A favourite line of Rozentalis with which White aims for smooth development and a slight space advantage. In the game Termeulen-Davies, Haarlem 2001, White tried the even more individual 3 ♕f3!? but after 3...c6 4 ♕g3 d6 5 f4 ♗f5 6 c3 e6 7 ♘f3 c5 8 ♗e2 ♘c6 9 0-0 ♗g6 10 ♘a3 a6 11 d4 cxd4 12 cxd4 b5 13 ♗d2 ♕b6 White was already in serious difficulty because of the pressure against his d4-pawn.

3...d6 4 exd6 cxd6

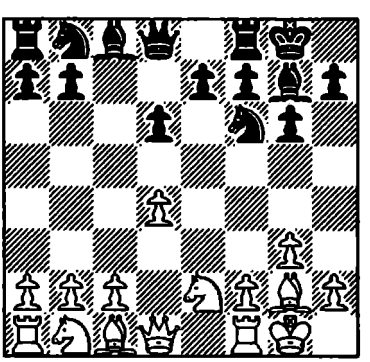
4...exd6 5 ♗g2 ♘f6 6 d4 d5 7 ♘f3 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘e5 ♘bd7 10 ♘c3 c6 11 f4 was slightly better for White in Rozentalis-Appel, German Bundesliga 1994.

5 ♗g2 ♘f6 6 d4 g6 7 ♘e2

The Israeli IM Alex Finkel has suggested an alternative plan of development for White with 7 b3, intending ♗b2, ♘d2, ♘gf3 and h3. It looks reasonable.

7...♗g7 8 0-0 0-0

Another reasonable line for Black was 8...d5 9 h3 0-0 10 ♘d2 ♘c6 11 c3 e5, Rozentalis-Cs.Horvath, European Team Ch., Debrecen 1992.



9 c3?!

After such a passive move Black will

have an easy time of it. The logical move is 9 c4, as played by Rozentalis himself in this position. Black in turn should probably reply with the flexible 9...♘c6 10 ♘bc3 and now:

a) 10...♗g4 11 ♗e3 ♕d7 12 f3 ♗h3 13 d5 ♘e5 14 b3 ♗xg2 15 ♔xg2 e6 16 ♖c1 (Rozentalis-Yermolinsky, Rakvere 1993) and now 16...♖fe8 would have left Black only slightly worse.

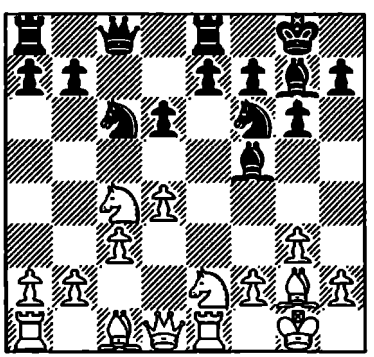
b) 10...♗f5 11 h3 a6 12 b3! ♖b8 13 ♗e3 h5 14 d5 ♘a5 15 ♘d4 ♗d7 16 a4 ♕c8 17 ♔h2 with an edge for White, Rozentalis-Pribyl, Liechtenstein 1996.

c) 10...a6! 11 b3 ♖b8 12 h3 ♗d7 13 d5 (13 ♗e3!?) 13...♘a5 14 ♘d4?! (14 ♗e3 is met by 14...b5 so White should probably play 14 ♗b2) 14...♕c8 15 ♔h2 b5! 16 ♖b1 bxc4 17 b4 ♘b7 18 ♗e3 ♘d8 when White had only nebulous compensation for the pawn in Rozentalis-Hjartarson, Tilburg 1994.

9...♘c6 10 ♘a3 ♗f5 11 ♘c4 ♕c8 12 ♖e1

White's eventual downfall in this game stemmed largely from his refusal to ever play d4-d5. Here he would be no worse after 12 d5 ♘b8 13 ♘e3 ♗h3 14 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 15 ♘f4 ♕c8 16 ♕e2.

12...♖e8



13 ♘e3

Again opting for a 'safety-first' approach. At this point he should play 13 ♘f4!? (preventing ...♗h3).

13...♗h3 14 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 15 ♘f4 ♕d7 16 ♘fd5?!

Facing a higher rated opponent, White is evidently trying to play it safe by exchanging pieces. Although his position is still solid enough, Black now has whatever chances that are going. 16 d5 was still the best, at least getting some space.

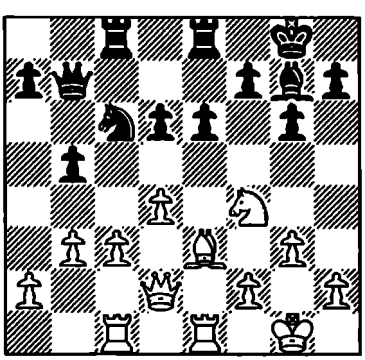
16...♘xd5 17 ♘xd5 e6 18 ♘f4 ♘a5!

Preparing ...b7-b5.

19 b3 b5 20 ♗e3

After 20 a4 Black should probably play the quiet 20...a6 with continued pressure. 20...b4 looks attractive at first sight; 21 cxb4?! ♘c6 22 ♗b2 ♘xb4 is better for Black, but White can play 21 c4 ♘c6 22 ♗b2.

20...♕b7 21 ♖c1 ♖ac8 22 ♕d2 ♘c6



The knight is en route for a better post, either f5 or d5.

23 ♘d3

23 d5 is now bad because of 23...♘e5 24 ♔g2 ♘d7 (24...♘g4!?) 25 f3 e5 26 ♘e2 f5, intending ...♘f6, with an active

kingside pawn majority and pressure against d5.

23...♘e7 24 ♗h6 ♗h8 25 ♗g5 ♘f5!?

Intending to undermine the d4-pawn with ...a7-a5 and ...b5-b4. White hurries to prevent this but in doing so seriously weakens his position.

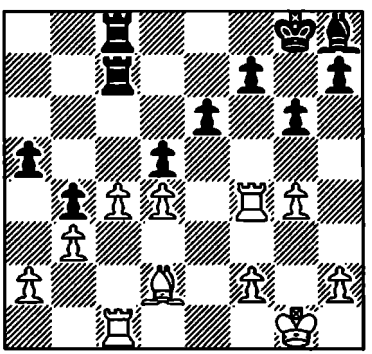
26 g4 ♘e7 27 ♗f4 ♖ed8 28 ♕e2 ♖d7 29 ♗d2 ♖dc7 30 ♘f4 ♘d5 31 ♕f3 ♘xf4 32 ♕xf4?!

With his kingside looking weak, White should definitely take the opportunity to exchange queens. After 32 ♕xb7!? ♘h3+ 33 ♔g2 ♖xb7 34 ♔xh3 a5 he is definitely worse, but the position should be tenable with accurate defence.

32...♕d5 33 ♕e4?

The final mistake. He had to vacate the c-file with 33 ♖cd1, after which 33...a5 (and not 33...b4?! 34 c4 ♕xd4 35 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 36 ♗xb4) 34 ♕e4 ♕xe4 35 ♖xe4 d5 36 ♖e2 still leaves him on the board. Now he is lost.

33...♕xe4 34 ♖xe4 b4! 35 c4 d5! 36 ♖f4 a5

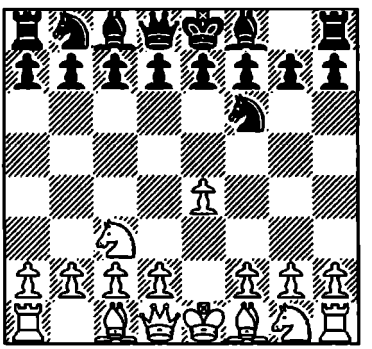


Simply threatening to take the pawn on c4. White covers this one but then loses his d4-pawn.

37 c5 g5 38 ♖f3 ♗xd4 39 ♗xg5 ♖xc5 40 ♖d1 ♗e5 41 ♔g2 ♖c2 42 ♗f6 ♗xf6 43 ♖xf6 ♖xa2 44 ♖d4 ♖e2 45 ♖df4 ♖c7 46 g5 ♖e5 47 h4 ♖d7 48 ♖d4 ♖e4 49 ♖xe4 dxe4 0-1

Game 62
Hector-van der Werf
Berlin 1993

1 e4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3



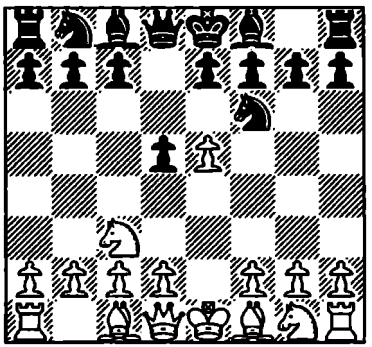
2...d5

The real 'Alekhine' move, but one which has been under pressure of late, due largely to the efforts of Swedish GM Jonny Hector. 2...e5 would transpose into a Vienna Game, which theory holds to be relatively harmless for Black.

3 e5

3 exd5 ♘xd5 4 ♗c4 is well met by 4...♘b6 5 ♗b3 ♘c6 (in the game Minnulina-Davies, Osteraker 1995 I tried the risky 5...c5 6 d3 ♘c6 7 ♕h5 e6 8 ♘f3 g6, after which White should have played 9 ♕h3 with dangerous attacking chances) 6 ♘f3 g6!? (more dynamic than 6...♗f5) 7 ♘g5 e6 8 d3 ♘d4 9 0-0 ♗.g7 10 ♘ce4 h6 11 ♘f3 ♘xb3 which was very comfortable for Black in

Rozentalis-Bagirov, Vilnius 1985.

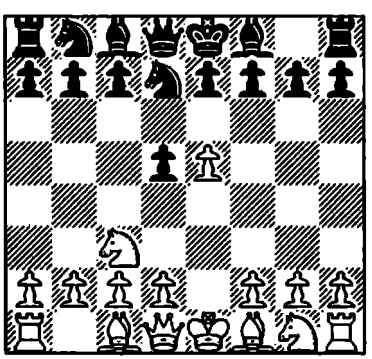


3...♘e4

There are two other moves, both of which lead to complex play:

a) 3...d4 4 exf6 dxc3 5 fxg7 cxd2+ 6 ♗xd2 ♗xg7 7 ♕f3 ♘c6 8 ♗b5 ♕d6 (or 8...0-0 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♗c3 ♗xc3+ 11 ♕xc3 ♕d5 12 ♖d1 ♕e4+ 13 ♘e2 ♗a6 14 ♖d2 ♖ad8 15 f3 ♕e6 16 ♔f2 with a clear advantage to White, Hector-Daillet, Cannes 1989) 9 ♗c3 0-0 10 ♗xc6 ♗xc3+ 11 ♕xc3 bxc6 12 ♘e2 ♗a6 13 ♖d1 ♕e6 14 ♕e3 ♕xe3 15 fxe3 and White had slightly the better endgame in Hector-Kengis, Haninge 1992.

b) 3...♘fd7



This currently looks like Black's best, though in this case Black must be prepared to transpose into a Classical French; 4 d4 e6 5 f4 c5 is the French transposition, which might be enough to put Alekhine exponents off this line.

White also has a sharp gambit line in 4 e6!? fxe6 5 d4 and now:

b1) After 5...c5 6 ♘f3 ♘c6, Hector has done well with 7 ♗b5!?, fighting for control of the d4 and e5 squares. Hector-Sergeev, Berlin 1995 continued 7...g6 8 dxc5 ♗g7 9 ♗e3 ♕a5 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖b1 a6 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 ♖e1 ♕c7 14 ♘g5 ♘e5 15 ♗d4 ♖f5 16 ♘h3 ♘f7 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 18 ♘a4 e5 19 ♘b6 ♖b8 20 c4 with a complex struggle in which I, for one, would prefer to play White.

b2) 5...g6 h4 ♗g7 7 h5 ♘f8 8 ♗f4! (White's number one priority is to clamp down on the e5-square; with this in mind, Bagirov's suggestion of 8 ♘f3 is also interesting, but a dubious alternative is 8 ♗d3 ♘c6! 9 hxg6 hxg6 10 ♖xh8 ♗xh8 11 ♗e3 e5! which gave Black a good game in Bobkov-Sokolov, correspondence 1960) 8...c5 9 ♘b5 ♘a6 (I don't really like this move; a far more critical line is 9...cxd4!? 10 ♘c7+ ♔f7 11 ♘xa8 e5 with a mighty centre and White's knight on a8 is trapped) 10 ♘f3 ♗d7 11 ♘e5 ♕a5+ 12 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13 ♔xd2 c4, Hector-Maus, Copenhagen 1990. In *The Complete Alekhine* Burgess gives no comment on this complex endgame. Personally speaking, I would not want to play Black – the extra pawn is useless and he is under severe pressure.

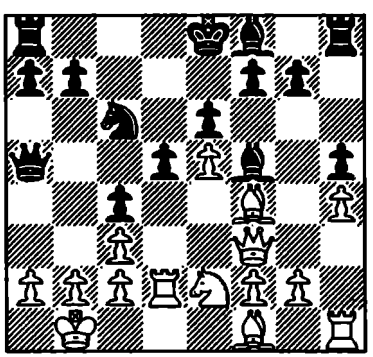
4 ♘ce2

This is probably the most critical move, aiming to gain time against Black's errant knight.

4 ♕f3 looks primitive, but it needs careful handling by Black: 4...♘xc3 5 dxc3 c5! (this natural move may be stronger than either 5...c6 or 5...g6; White gets some temporary pressure against d5 but it looks as if Black can handle it:

a) After 6 ♗b5+ Black's safest reply is 6...♘c6! (6...♗d7 can be answered by 7 e6!? fxe6 8 ♗d3 with dangerous-looking attacking chances for the pawn) 7 c4 e6 with a complicated game in prospect.

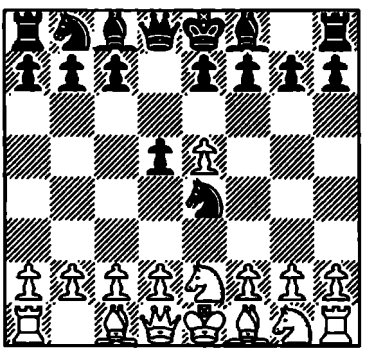
b) 6 ♗f4 ♗f5 7 0-0-0 e6 8 ♘e2?! (the critical move is 8 c4!?, after which 8...♗e4 9 ♕b3 d4 isn't clear) 8...♘c6 9 h4?! (and this doesn't help White either; the calm 9 ♔b1!? looks better) 9...h5! 10 ♔b1 ♕a5 11 ♖d2 (the immediate 11 ♘g3 is met by 11...♗g4, which is why White was probably regretting his 9th move at this stage) 11...c4!.



This simply threatens to generate an overwhelming attack with ...b5-b4; White, meanwhile, will unfortunately find it very difficult to generate any serious counterplay:

b1) After 12 ♘d4 there follows 12...♘xd4 13 ♖xd4 (13 cxd4 ♗b4 wins for Black) 13...♗c5 14 ♖d2 b5 with a winning attack.

b2) 12 ♘g3 ♗g6 13 ♕d1 b5 14 a3 (14 ♗e2 b4 15 cxb4 ♘xb4 16 a3 c3! wins) 14...b4! 15 axb4 ♗xb4! 16 ♗xc4! (16 cxb4 ♘xb4 17 ♖d4 c3 also gives Black a winning attack) 16...dxc4 17 ♕f3 0-0! 18 cxb4 (18 ♕xc6 ♗xc3!) 18...♘xb4 19 ♕a3 ♕xa3! 20 bxa3 ♘d5 21 ♗g5 ♖fb8+ 22 ♔a1 (22 ♔c1 c3 followed by ...♖b2 wins) 22...c3 23 ♖e2 ♖b2 24 ♘f1 (or 24 f3 ♖c8 25 ♘e4 ♖c6) 24...♖ab8 25 ♘e3 ♘b4 26 ♗e7 ♖a2+ 27 ♔b1 ♘xc2+! 0-1 was Zahariev-Stefanopoulos, Hania 1996.



4...f6

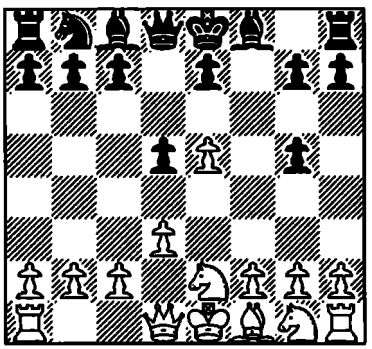
The other method of disrupting White's plans is with 4...d4 5 c3 and now:

a) 5...♘c6 (this is regarded as the critical line) 6 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 7 ♕a4+ c6 8 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 9 cxd4 ♘g5 10 ♗d3!? (10 ♗c4 ♗e6!? 11 d3 b5 12 ♗xb5 cxb5 13 ♗xg5 ♗d5 14 f3 e6 gave Black very annoying play for his pawns in Hector-Werner, Andorra 1988 – and both 10...♘e6 and 10 ...b5 are good alternatives) left Black with very little for his pawn after 10...♘e6 (10...♗e6? 11 h4 wins a piece) 11 ♘e2 g6 12 ♗e4 ♘c7 13 b3 ♗h6 14 h4 in the game Hector-

Anagnostou, Komotini 1992.

b) Black should probably play the simple 5...dxc3!? 6 bxc3 (and not 6 ♕a4+ ♘d7 7 ♕xe4 ♘c5) 6...♘c5 7 d4 ♘ca6 8 ♘f4 e6 9 ♘f3 c5, as in Niermann-Bagirov, Giessen 1993.

5 d3 ♘g5 6 ♗xg5 fxg5



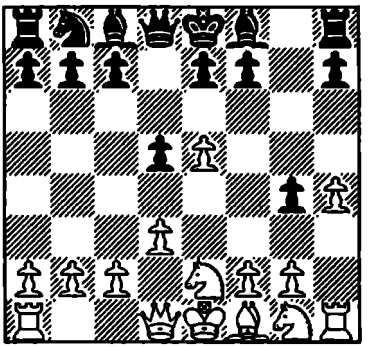
7 h4!

Much stronger than 7 ♘g3 e6 8 ♕g4 g6 9 h4 ♘c6!, which was good for Black in the encounter Paoli-Alburt, Odessa 1976.

7...g4

In his book *The Complete Alekhine* Burgess felt that this advance was necessary in order to keep the h-file firmly closed.

7...gxh4 is supposed to be bad for Black after 8 ♘f4 g6 9 ♖xh4 ♗g7 10 d4 c5 11 ♗d3 ♕a5+ 12 ♔f1 cxd4 13 ♖xh7! ♖xh7 14 ♗xg6+, the game Vorotnikov-Kengis, Riga 1983 'confirming' this assessment after some wild complications: 14...♔d8 15 ♗xh7 ♗xe5 16 ♕f3 ♘c6 17 ♘xd5 ♗e6 18 ♕f8+ ♔d7 19 ♕xa8 ♕b5+ 20 ♗d3 ♕xb2 21 ♘b6+ ♕xb6 22 ♘f3 ♗b8 23 c3 dxc3 24 ♖b1 ♕xb1+ 25 ♗xb1 ♔c7 and now 26 ♔e1 ♗d5 27 ♔d1! would have won fairly easily according to Kengis.

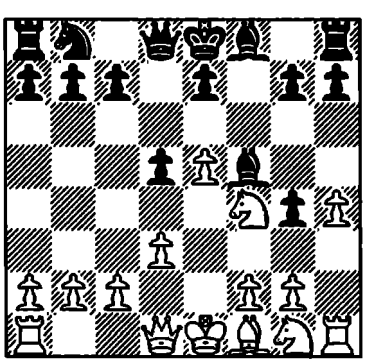


8 ♘f4

White can also play 8 d4 and after 8...c5 (Pedersen-Burgess, Assens 1990) the move 9 dxc5 is critical.

8...♗f5

An attempt to improve on the 8...g6 9 d4 ♗h6 10 ♘d3 ♘a6 11 ♗e2 c5 12 ♗xg4 of W.Watson-Dunworth, London 1987, which continued 12...cxd4 (Dunworth suggested that 12...c4 13 ♘c1 ♕b6 might be better, but after 14 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 15 ♘ce2 ♕xb2 16 ♖b1 ♕xa2 17 ♖xb7 White looks better) 13 h5 ♘c5 14 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 15 ♘f3 ♕a5+ (here Dunworth suggested 15...♕b6 but I doubt it helps after 16 0-0) 16 ♔f1 ♘e4 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 ♘xd4 with White much better because of Black's vulnerable king.



9 ♘ge2

Here 9 d4 looks like a good alternative.

9...♘c6 10 ♘g3 ♕d7 11 d4 ♘b4 12 e6 ♕d6

12...♗xe6 13 c3 ♘c6 14 ♗e2, intending to castle, eliminate the bishop on e6 and recapture the g4-pawn would leave Black with a poor position without any redeeming features. Understandably he tries to confuse the issue but Hector maintains a vice-like grip.

13 ♘xf5 ♕xf4 14 ♘e3 g3

There's not much choice – 14...h5 is answered by 15 c3 ♘c6 16 ♘xd5 ♕e4+ 17 ♘e3 ♕xe6 18 d5 etc.

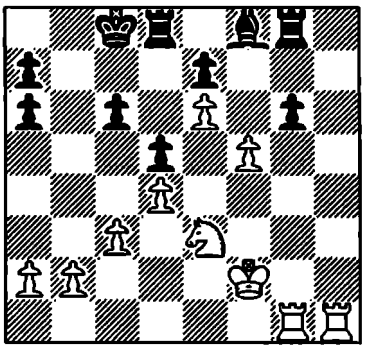
15 ♕f3 ♕xf3 16 gxf3 gxf2+ 17 ♔xf2 0-0-0 18 c3 ♘a6 19 h5!

Sealing in Black's f8 bishop.

19...c6?!

19...♖g8 was a slightly better try.

20 ♗xa6 bxa6 21 f4! ♖g8 22 f5 g6 23 hxg6 hxg6



24 ♖ag1

End of game. None of Black's pieces can do anything.

24...♗g7 25 ♖xg6 ♗f6 26 ♖hh6 ♖xg6 27 ♖xg6 c5 28 ♘g4 ♗h8 29 f6 ♗xf6 30 ♘xf6 exf6 31 dxc5 ♖e8 32 ♖xf6 ♔d8 33 ♔e3 ♔e7 34 ♖f7+ ♔xe6 35 ♖xa7 ♔e5 36 ♖xa6 ♖b8 37 ♖b6 1-0

Summary

One of the main difficulties in dealing with these lines is of a practical nature; they crop up so rarely that by the time you get to meet them you no longer remember what to do! I therefore advise occasional revision of anything that has not occurred in your tournament practice.

Against the 4 f4 of Game 57, I suggest 4...dxe5 5 fxe5 c5. My recommended antidotes to other lines are contained within the notes to this game. Westerinen's 3...♘b6 might be a useful surprise weapon to have available; it slows the game down and leads to some quite original play.

Hector's favourite 2 ♘c3 is not a problem if Black is happy playing a Vienna Game. The only purely 'Alekhine' line I can recommend for Black is Bagirov's 2...d5 3 e5 ♘e4 4 ♘ce2 d4 5 c3 dxc3, given in the notes to Game 62.

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5

2 ♘c3 d5 *(D)* – *Game 62*

2...♘d5 3 d4

3 ♘c3 ♘xc3 4 dxc3 d6 5 ♘f3

5...dxe5 6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7 ♘xe5 *(D)* – *Game 59*

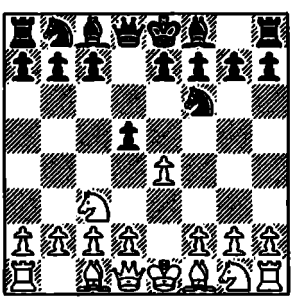
5...♘c6 – *Game 60*

3 g3 – *Game 61*

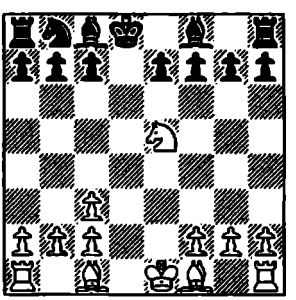
3...d6

3...♘b6 *(D)* – *Game 58*

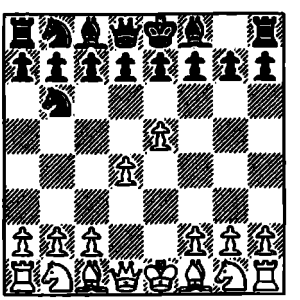
4 f4 c5 – *Game 57*



2...d5



7 ♘xe5



3...♘b6

INDEX OF COMPLETE GAMES

Aseev-Bagirov, *Berlin 1990* 9
Brener-Pushkin, *USSR 1988* 128
Davies-Sinha, *Calcutta 1990* 100
Degraeve-Miles, *Mondariz Zonal 2000* 51
Djurhuus-Agdestein, *Norwegian Ch., Asker 2000* 123
Ernst-Bagirov, *Helsinki 1992* 37
Ernst-Josefsson, *Swedish Ch., Karlskrona 1983* 38
Fedorov-Baburin, *Istanbul Olympiad 2000* 110
Grünfeld-Ljubojevic, *Riga Interzonal 1979* 119
Hagesaether.H-Wohl, *Ubeda 2000* 97
Hamdouchi-Baburin, *Saint Vincent 2000* 14
Hector-van der Werf, *Berlin 1993* 151
Honfi-Varga, *Budapest 1995* 88
Howell.J-Kengis, *London 1991* 28
Kobalija-Nalbandian, *Geller Memorial, Moscow 1999* 8
Kulaots-Kengis, *Riga Zonal 1995* 113
Leko-Timman, *Wijk aan Zee 1996* 62
Levacic-Rogulj, *Croatian Ch., Pula 1998* 77
Ljubicic-Zelcic, *Croatian Ch., Slavonski Brod 1995* 50
Mainka-Yusupov, *German Ch., Bremen 1998* 12
Mamadshoev-Wohl, *Yerevan Olympiad 1996* 127
Mendes-Rodrigues.R, *Figueira Foz Honra 1999* 112
Miles-Pons, *Andorra 1996* 34
Mischke-Schirmer, *Correspondence 1995* 125
Mortensen-Baburin, *Copenhagen 2000* 21

Mukhametov-Bagirov, *Bern 1995* 25
Mysliwiec-Krzyzanowski, *Correspondence 1995* 45
Nedev-Oney, *Heraklio 1997* 82
Nguyen Anh Dung-Anastasian, *Budapest 1999* 17
Nijboer-Vaganian, *Dutch League 2001* 32
Njobvu-Wohl, *Yerevan Olympiad 1996* 142
Nunn-Howell.J, *Port Erin 1994* 65
Oral-De Firmian, *Reykjavik 2000* 59
Paramonov-Bratchenko, *Petroff Memorial, St Petersburg 2000* 108
Pegoraro-Henderson, *Ischia 1996* 106
Petrik-Bogdanovski, *European Club Cup, Heraklio 1997* 149
Polgar.J-Agdestein, *Isle of Lewis (rapid) 1995* 35
Posch-Baburin, *Vienna 1995* 136
Potkin-Neverov, *St Petersburg 2000* 139
Reed.E-Danielsson.G, *Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939* 70
Rowson-Baburin, *Port Erin 1999* 86
Rozentalis-Sokolov.A, *Bern 1992* 42
Rozentalis-Volzhin, *Polish Team Ch., Zakopane 2000* 146
Sermek-Zelcic, *Croatian Team Ch., Makarska 1994* 101
Short-Agdestein, *Isle of Lewis (rapid) 1995* 30
Short-Miles, *European Ch., Ohrid 2001* 54
Sofronie-Zlatic, *Brasov 1998* 84
Stefansson-Westerinen, *Reykjavik 1997* 144
Sveshnikov-Solozhenkin, *Russia 1998* 135
Thorhallsson-Gausel, *Reykjavik 1997* 132
Tiviakov-Van der Werf, *Dutch Ch., Leeuwarden 2001* 49
Toothill-Davies, *British League 2001* 148
Ulibin-Baburin, *Vienna 1998* 72
Van der Weide-Miles, *European Ch., Saint Vincent 2000* 47
Velicka-Freisler, *Czech Ch., Zlin 1997* 93
Vetemaa-Shabalov, *USSR 1986* 118
Volzhin-Sveshnikov.L, *USSR 1988* 121
Watson.W-Baburin, *Kilkenny 1994* 53
Wydrowski-Marcinkiewicz, *Correspondence 1997* 67
Yagupov-Balashov, *Moscow 1996* 96
Yudasin-Kengis, *Minsk 1985* 105
Zarnicki-Malbran, *Argentine Ch., Buenos Aires 1998* 18